The Transcendence and Immanence of the Divine

in the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Thought

Waheeda Esmail

A Thesis in the Department of Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
(History and Philosophy of Religion)
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2011

Abstract

The Transcendence and Immanence of the Divine
in the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi`s Thought

Waheeda Esmail

This study is a comparative analysis of Jewish and Islamic mysticism through a focus on the *Bahir*—an early Kabbalist text—and Ibn al-Arabi, a major figure of Islamic mysticism. Roughly contemporary to one another (12th-13th centuries) and emerging in relative proximity (Southern France and Southern Spain), these two systems of thought share remarkable similarities, which this study explores and analyzes through the lens of the following question. How did the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi negotiate the tensions that arose between traditional concepts of divine transcendence and their own mystical conceptions of divine immanence? The authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi both belonged to monotheist traditions that emphasized the transcendence of the divine; however, both systems of thought also posited a cosmogony that included a concept of divine immanence. This study shows that the resemblance between these two thought systems is not limited to the structure of their cosmogonic systems, but extends to the way in which each resolved this tension.

Acknowledgements

For numerous years the Department of Religion at Concordia University has been a second home to me and many others. I would like to acknowledge all of those students and professors alike who have and will continue to contribute to its environment. I extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Prof. L Clarke and Prof. I Robinson who made themselves available to me at every turn and whose guidance helped to narrow a sea of possibilities. I also thank Tina Montandon and Munit Merid whose assistance has always gone beyond the administrative. Finally, I give thanks for my partner who has supported all of my endeavours as though they were his own.

And all go stumbling through that house

In lonely secrecy

Saying, *Do reveal yourself*

Or, *Why hast thou forsaken me*

<div align="right">— "The Guests" by Leonard Cohen</div>

Table of Contents

Introduction

A Brief Introduction to the Bahir and Ibn al-Arabi

Little can be said with certainty concerning the provenance of the *Bahir*. This early Kabbalist text is said to have come to light in Provence in 1176 where it also is said to have been redacted and at least partially written. This date and location is the subject of much debate, since the text seems to have been of greater influence on the Geronese Kabbalists of the early thirteenth century than it was on the Provençal Kabbalists of the late twelfth century (McGaha 25).[1] Thus, to give equal consideration to the various points of view about the emergence and origin of the *Bahir*, and until more definitive findings can be determined, we apply a generous date range from the end of the twelfth to the earlier part of the thirteenth century. Where the text was composed also is unknown, although the account of a medieval Kabbalist Isaac Cohen (c.1260-1270) is frequently cited and describes the transmission of the *Bahir* from the Orient to Provence-France through the standard trade routes of the time (Scholem, *Origins* 42). The text itself was not made widely available until its first publication in 1651 (Ripsman 2).

The *Bahir* is a fragmentary text written in both Hebrew and Aramaic and contains some Arabisms. The term *bahir* means bright or brilliant in Hebrew and is mentioned in the opening verse of the *Bahir,* along with the name of its alleged author. "Rabbi Nehuniah ben HaKana said: One verse (*Job 37:21*) states, 'And now they do not see light, it is brilliant in the skies … [round about God in terrible majesty]'" (Kaplan 1).

---

[1] See also Daniel Abrams, "Sefer Ha Bahir," *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 3 vols., Eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007) 62.

Rabbi Nehuniah ben ha-Kana was a well-known first century *tanna* (Rabbinic scholar) whose authorship had been pseudo-epigraphically attributed to various works prior to the emergence of the *Bahir*. Rabbi Nehuniah ben ha-Kana is particularly of interest in that he is said to have been the teacher of two other figures important to the Jewish esoteric tradition. These first century tannaitic scholars are Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva, both known not only for their study of *halakha* (Jewish law) but also for their feats in the esoteric *Merkebah* and *Heikhalot*[2] traditions. Throughout the *Bahir* references are made to these and other historically important Rabbis, such as Rabbis Berekhiah, Johanan, and Bun, thereby lending authority and validity to its teachings (Ripsman 2). The text also refers to fictitious or unknown persons, such as Rabbi Amorai and Rabbi Rehumai/Rahumai (ibid).

In part, the *Bahir* is a commentary on the *Sefer Yetsirah* (Campanini 33). The date of origin of the *Sefer Yetsirah* also has been a point of academic contention, and ranges anywhere between the first and tenth centuries. One of the concepts present in the *Sefer Yetsirah* is that of the *Sefirot,* which refers to stages of creation. Through commentary on this text, the authors of the *Bahir* expand the scope and meaning of the *Sefirot*, leading to their conceptualization as divine emanations and attributes (*ma'amarot*) (Scholem, *Origins* 27). Due to this shift in perspective, the Kabbalist tradition (of which the *Bahir* is an early part) is seen as separate and distinct from earlier Jewish esoteric traditions (Dan, *Mystical Dimension* 133). Thus, within the history of Kabbalist thought, the *Bahir*

---

[2] The *Merkabah* tradition refers to esoteric teachings from the first century CE to the Gaonic period (9th century) concerned with methods of mystical ascent into divine realms. The later *Heikhalot* tradition, beginning in the Gaonic period, describes the mystical journeys of the *Merkabah* mystics (Cohn-Sherbok 23).

presents a preliminary sketch of the Sefirotic structure, which was further developed by the Kabbalists of the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries.

The *Bahir* also presents itself as a work of *midrash* (biblical exegesis), replete with parables through which it expounds its mystical teaching. However, the teachings derived from the parables require a significant amount of decoding because unlike traditional *midrash*, the decoding key or *nimshal* that is usually provided is absent. This omission leaves the reader with little indication of what to extrapolate from the parables and makes the teachings of the *Bahir* that much more difficult for an outsider to penetrate (Stern 217). Extrapolating the teachings of the *Bahir* would require knowledge of Jewish scripture and exegesis, coupled with much re-reading of the text to gain a grasp of its symbolism. Moreover, even this method would not guarantee a thorough understanding of the text because the meaning of a given symbol/term shifts with the context of one passage to another (Campanini 13). As a result of this complexity, the *Bahir* is frequently interpreted with later Kabbalist thought in mind, which further obscures its original meaning.

The authors of the *Bahir* employ a midrashic style to give their teachings a sense of authority. Joseph Dan notes that this was a common practice in medieval Judaism (*Midrash* 138). As a result, novel mystical teachings could be advanced through established religious texts, giving the appearance that these new teachings were present within the tradition all along (128). Thus, this approach maintained traditional religious authority as it related to the mastery of scripture, and simultaneously allowed the Kabbalist to re-imbue traditional symbols with new meaning (Dan et al. 11). The Kabbalistic reliance on the use of symbols to expound their thought made it easier to deal

with accusations of heresy from traditional authorities, since any controversy associated with their ideas could be attributed to a misreading of their symbols (Dan et al. 9). Indeed, certain aspects of the mystical teaching of the *Bahir* were considered to be controversial, if not heretical. One such early example is that of Rabbi Meir ben Simon of Narbonne who is said to have denounced the *Bahir* as heretical in 1245 (Campanini 9). Other, positive references to the text were made by the famed Rabbi Nahmanides (c. 1194-1270) and by important Geronese Kabbalists Rabbis Ezra and Azriel (c. 1230). The concepts generally deemed heretical in the *Bahir* relate to ideas regarding reincarnation and divine immanence. In addition, several of the parables within the text describe relationships of incest. David Stern notes that these instances served to ward off those who could not "decode" the parables, and therefore were not the intended audience of the *Bahir* (222).

Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240), also known as the *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master) and the *Muhyī al-dīn* (Reviver of religion), was a Sufi master born in Murcia, Andalus (Spain). Born to an elite family, he was educated in Seville where he had his first ecstatic vision at the approximate age of 15 (Hirtenstein and Notcutt 7). Around this time, he was under the spiritual guidance of two female saints—Yasamin of Marshena and Fatima of Cordoba (Nasr, *Sages* 92). Much of Ibn al-Arabi's life is characterized by travelling and meeting important Islamic figures and Sufi masters. For instance, on a visit to Cordoba while still a young man, he met and made an impression on Ibn Rushd (Averroes). In 1198, he had a vision in which he was urged to depart from Andalus and head east toward the Orient. In 1202, he arrived in Mecca where, following other ecstatic visions, he began to compose his largest treatise the *Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūhāt al-*

Makkīyah). From Mecca, Ibn al-Arabi continued to travel and had the unfortunate experience of being forced to flee Cairo where Islamic jurists had denounced him as a heretic (Austin 9). From Cairo, he travelled to Aleppo, Konya, and Baghdad, conferring with various Sufi masters. By 1223, when Ibn al-Arabi finally decided to settle in Damascus, he was renowned throughout the Islamic world. After settling in, he taught and completed his vast collection of writings. Ibn al-Arabi passed away in 1240 and was buried at a site considered holy within the Islamic tradition (Nasr, *Sages* 97). In the sixteenth century, a shrine was erected at Ibn al-Arabi's grave site by Sultan Salim II (97).

Although Ibn al-Arabi was a prolific writer, penning hundreds of documents, many of them remain in manuscript form. Two of Ibn al-Arabi's works most frequently referred to and cited are the *Meccan Openings* (*al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*), comprising some 560 chapters and taking over 30 years to complete and the *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusūs al-Hikam*) completed in 1229 and containing 27 chapters. On the extensive contents of Ibn al-Arabi's *Futūhāt*, Seyyid Hossein Nasr states:

> The Futūhāt contains, in addition to the doctrines of Sufism, much about the lives and sayings of earlier Sufis, cosmological doctrines of Hermetic and Neoplatonic origin integrated into Sufi metaphysics, esoteric sciences like *Jafr*, alchemical and astrological symbolism, and practically everything else of an esoteric nature which in one way of another has found a place in the Islamic scheme of things (*Sages* 98).

Thus, Ibn al-Arabi's work encompassed not only his own thought but the thought of the Sufi tradition up to and including his own lifetime.

Although Ibn al-Arabi formalized Sufi thought and fuelled it further for centuries through his own contributions, he did not consider himself to be its innovator. Instead, he perceived himself as a transmitter (Austin 13). Accordingly, the *Meccan Openings* and the *Bezels of Wisdom* were described by Ibn al-Arabi as divinely inspired by the prophets. In fact, in 1190 at Cordoba, Ibn al-Arabi had a vision in which he was told that he was the Seal of Mohammed. This signified that Ibn al-Arabi had been divinely chosen to expound the mystical aspects of Mohammed's teachings at a level previously unknown to humankind.[3]

Ibn al-Arabi states that his mystical knowledge was the result of his ecstatic experiences. Often referred to by him as "unveiling," these experiences gave him access to the deeper, esoteric meanings of the existing Islamic tradition. Unveiling also was the means by which Ibn al-Arabi was able to confirm or deny interpretations of the Islamic tradition. The personal and experiential nature of this approach made him unpopular with many of the learned religious theologians/jurists of his time whose interpretive methods were more traditionally grounded in determining scriptural validity and/or rational argument.

However, Ibn al-Arabi was not against the use of reason in contemplating the divine. In fact, he argued for an approach that incorporated both reason and unveiling, whereby reason was required to understand the difference between God and creation, and the experience of unveiling revealed God's similarity and/or nearness to creation (Chittick SD XXXVII). According to Ibn al-Arabi, the process of unveiling occurs

---

[3] Within the Islamic tradition, Mohammed is the last and therefore the "Seal of the Prophets." Thus, Ibn al-Arabi could/would not claim that his mystical teachings came directly to him from God. Instead, Ibn al-Arabi, as the "Seal of Mohammed," was able to gain mystical insight from the divine realm without interfering with the well-established facts of the tradition.

through the mystically accessible "imaginal world," which is the intermediary plane between mankind and the divine. Although Ibn al-Arabi does seem to favour the "experience" of the divine over arriving at Him rationally, he does state that both perspectives (God as far/near) are necessary to the human experience, leading to the high mystical state of Bewilderment (*hayrah*).

Like many Islamic thinkers, Ibn al-Arabi explains his thought through the exegesis of existing religious scripture (i.e., *Quran* and *Hadith*). However, because his understanding was informed by the process of unveiling, he often interpreted traditional sources in novel and even contrary ways, which led to the further displeasure of the religious authorities. Scriptural exegesis was central to Ibn al-Arabi's method because it allowed him to place his ideas at the root of the Islamic tradition (Nettler 15). Although the first two of Ibn al-Arabi's sources—the *Quran* and *Hadith* (the third being unveiling)—were widely available to his audience, they did not make his teachings that much more accessible. For him, the cosmos and religious scripture are filled with symbols that point to the existence, knowledge, and presence of God. In addition, the universe of symbols is in a constant state of flux, producing multiple meanings and requiring constant deciphering. This description of Ibn al-Arabi's worldview is equally applicable to his writing style in that his ideas are not systematically exposed and his highly nuanced terms require his readers' constant vigilance. In addition, William C. Chittick notes that Ibn al-Arabi's ideas are "full-blown" wherever they appear in his writing, making it difficult for the reader to gain their bearings before delving further (Chittick SD X). Thus, Ibn al-Arabi's style also conveys something of the mystic

experience, whereby the realization of the presence of the divine is also "full blown" wherever it occurs.

Research Question

The preceding brief introduction shows that the emergence of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi were loosely contemporary to one another (twelfth to thirteenth centuries).[4] Nor were they greatly distanced in terms of geographic location with the *Bahir* emerging from Provence in Southern France,[5] and Ibn al-Arabi born in Murcia, al-Andalus (Southern Spain). The *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi both describe the divine as immanent within creation, while simultaneously belonging to monotheistic traditions that described the divine as transcendent. Moreover, variables relating to the philosophical and theological thought contemporary to these mystical subjects had an impact on the development of their thought. However, these contexts are not the focus of this study, nor is the question of influence between the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi. Instead, this study explores how the two systems address the tension between transcendence and immanence of the divine, that is between the mystical perception of the Divine in all things, and the doctrinal demands of monotheism.

Primarily, the concern of the mystic is to gain personal contact and experience of the divine. Thus, for him/her the concept of God as a transcendent entity, existing passively beyond human perception and experience, requires modification. However, when one belongs to a monotheist tradition, "bringing God down" to one's level to experience and commune with God can become dangerously akin to pantheism and/or

---

[4] Here we must take into account that parts of the *Bahir* pre-date Ibn al-Arabi's birth.
[5] McGaha claims that the *Bahir* may have been written in Northern Spain by Jews fleeing al-Andalus and Almohad persecution (31).

polytheism. The *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi both "bring God down" to allow for mystical contact with the divine; however, due to their monotheism, they also maintain an aspect of the "traditional" [6] concept of God's transcendence. Thus, both systems contain a similar tension between a monotheist conception of divine transcendence and a mystically required concept of divine immanence.

The purpose of this study is to examine and compare how each system deals with the tension between the traditional monotheist concept of divine transcendence and the mystics' conception of divine immanence. This comparative analysis shows that both systems developed similar mystical ideas and methods for dealing with the previously described tension. It also should be noted that the current study does not exhaust all possible points of comparison between the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi. Other themes and points of comparison are certainly possible, and a few examples are provided in the concluding remarks.

Previous Contributions

Given the breadth and scope of the historical points of contact between Judaism and Islam, it is fair to say that academia has barely scratched the surface of possible comparisons. While a number of studies exist that explore the historical interactions between Judaism and Sufism, far fewer have dealt with the similarities and interactions between Kabbalism and Sufism.[7]

---

[6] I have placed the term *traditional* in quotation marks because anthropomorphic descriptions of the divine were present in both the Judaic and Islamic traditions prior to the rise of the philosophical and theological discourse that placed emphasis on the transcendent descriptions of the divine. Thus, "traditional" actually refers to the general trend in the perception of the religious authorities of this period.

[7] Paul B. Fenton provides a survey of previous studies and points of contact in his "Judaism and Sufism" *History of Islamic Philosophy I*. 755-768.

This study examines early Kabbalah and twelfth century Sufism as exemplified by the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought. However, points of comparison (some of which have been explored) certainly exist between Sufism and later Kabbalism, for instance, between Sufi thought and the *Zohar*, Lurianic Kabbalah, and Hasidism. Closer to the area of the current study is Ronald Kiener's article "Ibn Arabi and the Qabbalah: A Study of Thirteenth Century Iberian Mysticism," which provides a comparison of Ibn al-Arabi's thought and that of the *Zohar*.[8] Although not the case with Kiener's article, many of the studies dealing with early Kabbalism and Sufism are focused on the question of influence. At the center of this debate is the use of letter mysticism and the tree of life imagery present in both systems of thought. Little consensus seems to exist with regard to the provenance of letter mysticism, with some arguing that it is Islamic in origin[9] and others insisting that its precepts were present in Talmudic *Gematriyah*.[10]

To my knowledge, only one other comparative study has been done on the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought—Michael McGaha's article "The Sefer ha-Bahir and Andalusian Sufism." In this work, McGaha is primarily concerned with the question of Sufi influences on the *Bahir*. To demonstrate his argument, he provides a few examples from the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought regarding letter mysticism. The current study differs from Michael McGaha's approach in a number of ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, by virtue of the length of the current study, more points of comparison can be offered. Second, the present work is not at all concerned with proving the influence of Ibn al-Arabi on the *Bahir* or vice versa. Thus, it remains unburdened by questions of

---

[8] The *Zohar* is a thirteenth century Kabbalist text that emerged after the *Bahir.*

[9] See Steven Wasserstrom, "Sefer Yesira and Early Islam: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy III* (1993): 1-30.

[10] See Paul Fenton, "Judaism and Sufism," *History of Islamic Philosophy I,*. Eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1996): 756.

historical influence, which narrow the field of comparison to only those that can be historically traced. It is hoped that the present work will stand as an original contribution to the field of comparative Jewish and Islamic mysticism by treating the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought systems as equals, allowing each to be described in its own terms while displaying the similarity of their thought and methods in dealing with a primary concern—the transcendence and immanence of the divine.

Methodology and Limitations

This study employs the method of textual analysis. The *Bahir* was consulted in English translation in the following works: *Origins of the Kabbalah* by Gershom Scholem; *The Early Kabbalah* by Joseph Dan, Moshe Idel, and Ronald Kiener; and *The Bahir* by Aryeh Kaplan. This last source represents the only complete English translation currently available. Unfortunately, Aryeh Kaplan has been criticized for his commentary on the *Bahir,* since it displays his tendency to interpret it according to later Kabbalist thought. To mitigate the risk of this influence on the current study, I have maintained a vigilant approach when consulting his commentary, attempting always to validate his statements by other passages of the *Bahir* and through the analysis of other specialists in the secondary sources.

For Ibn al-Arabi's work, I have primarily consulted translations of his M*eccan Openings* (*Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*) and *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusūs al-Hikam*). The former are usually provided by William C. Chittick's *Sufi Path of Knowledge* and the *Self-Disclosure of God.*[11] Citations from the *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusūs al-Hikam*) are either

---

[11] From this point forward, I refer to Chittick's *Sufi Path of Knowledge* in abbreviated form as SPK; similarly, I abbreviate his *Self-Disclosure of God* to SD.

taken from RWJ Austin's translation of the full text or from excerpts provided in Toshihiko Izutsu's *Sufism and Taoism*.[12]

Since the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's writings have been consulted only in translation, I have stayed close to the interpretations provided by the scholars who have accessed the texts in their original source languages. Thus, the present study does not offer new interpretations of what the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi originally said. Instead, the analysis focuses on the similarity of both systems with regards to how each deals with a similar metaphysical problem.

In terms of the breadth of material available on each of the two subjects, much more material is available on the prolific Ibn al-Arabi and his thought than on the singular, short, and somewhat obscure text of the *Bahir*. Nevertheless, in the ensuing chapters, the reader will see that all expositions of a given topic begin with the *Bahir* as the point of departure. The reason for this is twofold: 1) because the *Bahir* likely pre-dates Ibn al-Arabi, at least in parts and 2) because, for reasons explained in the next paragraph, the theme of the transcendent and immanent within the *Bahir* has been utilized in this study to frame and contextualize the corresponding themes in Ibn al-Arabi's thought.

The approach used to examine Ibn al-Arabi's thought is similar to that of William C. Chittick's and other Ibn al-Arabi specialists, in that Chittick first isolates a given theme in the *Shaykh*'s thought, and then provides an appropriate excerpt from his writings to demonstrate this theme (SD X). Again, Chittick and others employ this approach to Ibn al-Arabi because he does not systematically expound his thought (X).

---

[12] N.B: Arabic transliteration based on the Library of Congress method will be provided throughout the present work in limited form. The purpose of transliteration where it appears is to assist the reader with pronunciation. Commonly known terms such as *Quran*, *Hadith* and Ibn al-Arabi will not be transliterated.

Thus, in a similar fashion, I isolate the passages relating to the transcendence and immanence of the divine within the *Bahir*, comparing them with the most closely related ideas in Ibn al-Arabi's system. In fact, because the *Bahir* is equally unsystematic in the presentation of its thought, I could have applied this same method in reverse. However, given the vastness of the material on Ibn al-Arabi's thought, I have chosen to employ the *Bahir* to narrow the scope of the analysis.

The present work is divided into three chapters, each dealing with an essential component of both systems of thought. The first chapter examines the concept of divine immanence as it relates to the role of mankind within both systems. The second chapter moves to the opposite end of the spectrum by discussing divine transcendence and its relationship to creation. The third and last chapter explores the system of intermediaries created by both systems, which serve to bridge the distance between the transcendent divine and its immanence within creation. To conclude, the study presents an overview of how the three positions (immanence, transcendence, and the intermediary realms) are employed by both systems to reconcile the mystical dilemma of the divine as both above and beyond human perception (transcendent) and personally involved and invested in the human experience (immanent).

Chapter One: A Pole of Immanence

The authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi adhere to the biblical premise that man was created in God's image. In interpreting this premise, both conceive of mankind as the quintessential model of God on a smaller scale, i.e., the microcosm, whereas the macrocosm, that is the Cosmos, manifests God in a less perfect manner. These macro/microcosmic paradigms describe the inner workings of the divine as well as how the divine interacts with man and creation. As the microcosm of the Absolute, the human being not only represents the best means to attain knowledge of God but also comes to represent God's presence in and commitment to the world.

The system of the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir* symbolizes God, man, and the relationship between them simultaneously. On a macrocosmic scale, the structure and order of the *Sefirot*[13] describe God and His Attributes (s. *middah*, pl. *middot*). The general outline of the Sefirotic system resembles the human form, complete with head, trunk, hands, and feet. In this form, the structure is referred to as *Adam Kadmon* or the Primeval Man (Scholem, *Origins* 139). This model can comprise all ten of the *Sefirot* or just the last seven in the sequence. Where the upper three (*Keter, Hokmah, Binah*) are excluded from the model, their transcendence and dissimilarity to mankind is emphasized (Kaplan 146). Regarding the parallel between the divine and human forms, verse 82 describes the various parts of man's body and then states: "Paralleling these are the powers in heaven. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 7:14*), 'Also one opposite the other has God made'" (Kaplan 30). The "powers in heaven" refer to the *Sefirot*, which are equated here with the

---

[13] N.B. The *Bahir* does not often refer to the stages of the *Sefirot* by name; more frequently, it refers to them as *middot* (attributes) or alludes to them through the use of parables.

body parts of human beings. The opposition described in the second part of the statement indicates that although mankind and God share a similar form, mankind remains different and/or distant. Ultimately, this distance is bridged by the "flow" of the divine which occurs through the system of the *Sefirot* into mankind and thereby into the world. In this sense, the system of the *Sefirot* exemplifies not only the form of man and God but also the relationship that is established between them through the divine flow in the *Sefirot*.

The completion of microcosmic man through the establishment of the covenant brings the divine "flow" into reality. On this, the *Bahir* states: "To the extent that we can express it, the Structure was completed in Abraham. [Regarding the Structure] it is written (*Genesis 9:6*) 'For in the form of God, He made the man'" (Kaplan 4). "The Structure" refers to the macrocosmic system of the *Sefirot—Adam Kadmon—*made functional through the completion of the microcosm—*Abraham—*allowing the divine to flow through him and into the world. It should be noted that the structure of the Primeval Man is "completed in Abraham" and not with Adam. The completion of the structure lies in the establishment of the covenant with Abraham (Kaplan 125). Through this covenant, souls are transmitted from the divine regions of the structure into the world. In terms of the anthropomorphic symbolism of the *Bahir*, this translates into souls/divine wisdom (*Hokmah*) being transmitted from the head of the structure (*Keter/ Hokmah*) down into the womb/world (*Shekinah)* through the covenant/phallus (*Yesod)*. The parallel between the structure of God and the structure of the human body is evident here, since each transmits the divine/souls into the world through conduits within their bodily structures.

Similar to the macrocosmic structure of *Adam Kadmon* in the *Bahir*, Ibn al-Arabi's *al-Insān al-Kabīr* or Great Man represents the Cosmos as the externalized form of

God (Izutsu 221). Within the Great Man resides the microcosmic *al-Insān al-Kāmil* or the Perfect Man. On the nature and purpose of the Great and Perfect Men, Ibn al-Arabi states: "(Before the creation of Man) God had already brought into being the whole universe with an existence like that of a vague and obscure image having a form but no soul within. It was like a mirror that was left unpolished..." (Izutsu 221). Often, Ibn al-Arabi describes the Great Man or Cosmos as God's Shadow, in that a shadow indicates the presence of something without divulging much information about the object it represents (Izutsu 89). This concept is present in the passage just quoted, along with the recurring metaphor of the universe and man as God's mirror. In Ibn al-Arabi's system, God created man and the cosmos for the purpose of His Self-Disclosure (*tajallī*).[14] In light of this goal, the cosmos represents the mirror in which the Divine Names/Attributes of God are manifested. These Names belong to God and serve as the archetypes through which all things are brought into being. According to Ibn al-Arabi's description, because the attributes were spread throughout the cosmos, the mirror remained unclear until Adam was created. Representing "the polishing of the mirror," Adam—as the first Perfect Man—completes the Self-Disclosure of God by reflecting God's image in creation clearly, distinctly, and comprehensively (*jāmiʾ*) in one locus. The polishing of the mirror (or perfecting of creation) is achieved through Adam as a singular locus manifesting all of the divine Names within himself (Izutsu 222).

In terms of the macrocosm, the Great Man as the cosmos is viewed as God's body or form, whereas the Perfect Man or mankind represents God's spirit within it (Hussaini 104). This model, like the macro/micro model of the *Bahir,* describes how God relates to

---

[14] N.B: In Ibn al-Arabi's system, whenever the Self-Disclosure is referred to, it represents God's Self-Disclosure to Himself through creation, i.e., God gaining knowledge of Himself through creation. Any Disclosure that occurs to man in the course of *tajallī* is secondary (Chittick, SD 29).

the world. In this case as well, God's spiritual interaction occurs most definitively

through man, although He continues to remain the source of the physical Cosmos. On the

microcosmic scale, Ibn al-Arabi's Adam (or the Perfect Man) reflects God in two ways:

the first being his full manifestation of the Divine Names/Attributes, and the second

being that, like God, his outer form is composed of the cosmos, while his inner nature is

of spiritual origin. In Ibn al-Arabi's system, this dual nature is the deeper meaning behind

God's statement (Q38:75)[15] about having created Adam with His two hands (Austin 56).

In addition to being the microcosm, Adam plays an important role in the creative

act. In Ibn al-Arabi's own commentary on his *Fusūs al-Hikam*, he states:

> So when the perfect comprehensive theophany *(tajallī)* descends upon its locus of
>
> manifestation, the Perfect Man, he receives it through his perfect, comprehensive
>
> and unified reality, and that theophany courses through all of the realities within
>
> his nature…. Therefore the bounties and blessings which descend upon the
>
> realities of the world through the theophany of the All-merciful only reach these
>
> realities after having become determined within the Perfect Man…. Therefore the
>
> realities and archetypes of the world are his subjects, and he is the vicegerent
>
> *(khalīfah)* over them (Chittick 5).

The first part of the excerpt quotation addresses the comprehensive nature of Adam as the

manifestation of the Divine Names (here the Names are referred to as "realities"). The

second part of the quotation signifies that the Names can only be manifested into forms

after they have been determined within Adam. Here Adam is both the complete

manifestation of the names as well as the blueprint/intermediary through which they

---

[15] "What prevents you from prostrating to one whom I have created with my two hands?" (Ibn al-Arabi,
quoting the Quran 38:75, cited in Austin 56),

become actualized into the world (Singh 278). Due to his role in creation, the special status of Regent over the world is bestowed upon Adam as the microcosmic epitome of God (Izutsu 235). In addition, as the blueprint of creation and complete manifestation of the Divine Names, Adam becomes the pole (*qutb*) through which everything in creation ultimately connects to God.

The preceding discussion illustrates how perfected beings, through the covenant in the *Bahir* or the manifestation of divine attributes in Ibn al-Arabi, represent microcosmic versions of God and the Cosmos. In each system, mankind is allotted a special position that allows for the divide between the macro/micro models to be transcended. In addition, the Abraham of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Adam both "complete the structure" of creation. In the case of the *Bahir*, Abraham completes the structure through the establishment of the covenant. In the case of Ibn al-Arabi, Adam is the polished mirror in which God's Self Disclosure is most completely expressed. Furthermore, in each example, human perfections connect man and God, serving as conduits for God's entry into the world. In the *Bahir*, Abraham's covenant allows him to bring souls, which are of divine origin, into the world. Similarly, Ibn al-Arabi's Adam, as the locus of manifestation for the Divine Names /archetypes, serves as the blueprint through which the rest of the world comes into being. In this role, Adam brings about the manifestation of God's attributes into the world. Both perfected beings "complete the structure" by serving as microcosmic intermediaries between the world and its Divine source.

In the *Bahir*, the basis for the soul begins in the second *Sefirah, Hokmah*.

Emanating from the highest *Sefirah—Keter—Hokmah* represents God's thought[16] and is

referred to as the Wisdom of God and/or the Primordial *Torah*. In this function, it

represents the logos or Word of God that contains and is the source of all possible things

(Wolfson, "Hebraic" 156). In his commentary on the *Bahir*, Kaplan states of *Hokmah*:

"Wisdom is the conduit of God's Essence, and it therefore sustains all things. As the link

between Creator and creation, it is the vehicle containing the potential for all things" (92).

Here Kaplan notes that *Hokmah* transmits the Essence or inner nature of God into

creation. In this role, *Hokmah* functions as the intermediary between the most

transcendent aspect of God (*Keter*) and the presence and immanence of God within

creation.

This transmission is made within the third *Sefirah, Binah*. At this stage, the link

between *Hokmah*, *Torah*, God's spirit, and the creation of the world come together. Verse

143 of the *Bahir* elucidates this point: "The third one is the quarry of the Torah, the

treasury of Wisdom, the quarry of the 'spirit of God.' This teaches us that God carved out

all the letters of the Torah, engraved it with spirit, and with it made all Forms" (Kaplan

53). *Binah* is referred to as "the treasury of Wisdom," since it is where *Hokmah* becomes

housed. Through this containment, *Hokmah* begins the process towards limitation and

manifestation (Green, *Medieval* 117). Described also as the "quarry," *Binah* symbolizes

the stage at which the specific letters of the *Torah* are "carved" from their

undifferentiated presence in the Primordial *Torah*/ *Hokmah.* As the stage where this

differentiation occurs, *Binah* exemplifies the creative act whereby the many emerge from

---

[16] *Keter* represents the "head" of Primordial man, hence thought/*Hokmah* emanates from the head/*Keter* (Kaplan 96).

the One and the Divine Source is manifested into the cosmos (Scholem, *Origins* 135).

This differentiation is indicated in the preceding quotation where "the spirit of God" is

engraved upon the letters of the *Torah*, which serve as the building blocks of creation.

After being manifested in creation, the letters permeate everything along with the "spirit

of God" with which they were "engraved." Furthermore, the presence of the Spirit of God

is central to the continuing existence of the world. Verse 179 of the *Bahir* states: "The

[physical] world is like a mustard seed inside a ring. Why? Because of the Spirit that

blows upon it, through which it is sustained. If this spirit were to be interrupted or

annihilated for even a moment, the world would be annihilated" (Kaplan 69). The breath

of God is equated to the Spirit of God, the presence of which is required for the

maintenance of the cosmos.

The metaphor of the Cosmic Tree also describes the relationship between the

Wisdom/spirit of God and the *Sefirot* that proceed from it into the world. Verse 119 of

the *Bahir* describes this process by way of a metaphor:

> What is this tree that you mentioned? He said: It represents the Powers of the
>
> Blessed Holy One, one above the other. Just like a tree brings forth fruit through
>
> water, so the Blessed Holy One increases the Powers of the Tree through water.
>
> What is the water of the Blessed Holy One? It is wisdom. It is the souls of the
>
> righteous (Kaplan 45).

Although not specified in this verse, the Cosmic Tree is inverted with the *Sefirah Keter* at

its root (Dan, *Midrash* 135). The Wisdom of God/*Hokmah*, represented as water, flows

through the tree from the root-*Keter* to the fruits at the ends of the tree branches. As the

Wisdom of God flows through the Tree, it strengthens the proceeding *Sefirot* and flows

into the fruit of the tree, which are the souls of men born into the world through the systems' cosmic entry point, the last *Sefirah*, *Shekinah* (Wolfson, *Path* 74). As such, the human soul is said to be inhabited by God's Wisdom/Light/Spirit (Scholem, *Major Trends* 110).

Similar to the *Bahir*, the basis of the soul in Ibn al-Arabi's system emerges in the first emanation of God from His most transcendent state. The first and "Most Holy Emanation" is God's initial Self-Disclosure to Himself in which the transcendent Essence recognizes His ultimate unity as well as the potential for all of His Divine Names within Himself (Izutzu 43). It is at this moment that the Mohammedan Reality is born:

> The Wisdom of Singularity was dedicated to the Logos of Muhammad because he is the first determination with which the One Essence determined Itself before it manifested Itself in any of the other infinite Self-determinations (Chittick, "Ibn al-Arabi's Own Commentary of the Fusūs al-Hikam" 40).

Representing the intermediary stage between God as the transcendent "One Essence" and the beginning of manifestation into the various "Self-Determinations" of the second emanation, the Mohammedan Reality serves as the logos/Word of God that maintains the unity of the One Essence, while making the differentiation of the Divine Names contained within it possible (Affifi 71). In this sense, the Mohammedan Reality bridges the transcendent and immanent aspects of God. In addition, the Mohammedan Reality, as the pre-manifest repository of the names, is not unlike a Primordial Quran that later becomes manifest in the Perfect Man that embodies it completely (Singh 281).

Ibn al-Arabi describes and refers to the Mohammedan Reality in many different ways. Thus, the following discussion focuses on the relationship between a few

synonyms for the Mohammedan Reality, namely the Word, Speech, Breath, and Spirit of God as they relate to the creative process and mankind. We have already established that the Mohammedan Reality as the Word of God was the precursor of creation. According to Ibn al-Arabi, God speaks as He creates, and this is the Word that is spoken and made manifest in creation (Nicholson 153). This Speech is ultimately God's Self-Expression through which He is disclosed to Himself through the manifestation of His Names. On this, Ibn al-Arabi states: "He knew the cosmos from His knowledge of Himself, so He made nothing manifest in engendered existence save what He is in Himself…The Breath of the All-Merciful made the cosmos manifest…" (Chittick, SD 70). The Breath is associated with Mercy because the Names are said to have "suffered in anguish," longing to be made manifest when they existed in *potentia* only (Corbin 184). Furthermore, the Breath represents something internal to God externalized into creation (184).

The exhalation indicates the Divine investiture into creation, since through this Breath, God imparts His own Spirit into mankind. This investiture is described by Ibn al-Arabi in his chapter on Jesus in the *Fusūs al-Hikam*: "God, when He perfected the human body, as He says, *When I perfected him*, blew into him of His spirit, attributing all spirit in man's being and essence to Himself" (Austin 178). When God blows His Spirit into mankind, He perfects it, making it the locus in which His Self-Disclosure can occur. Here the inner nature of man is explained as capable of reflecting the inner nature of God because their source is one and the same. In fact, man's spirit belongs ultimately to God, as it is the locus in which God is disclosed to Himself (Nettler 36).

By way of comparison, the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi systems describe the special role of mankind within creation in similar ways. The authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-

Arabi both place the origin of the human soul at the first transitional intermediary point before the differentiation of creation occurs. This places mankind at the highest possible level of the creative process, between the transcendence and immanence of God. Second, each holds that the Spirit of God was imparted unto man simultaneously with the manifestation of the Divine Word. As a result, the Spirit/Word/Logos is seen as permeating all of creation, finding its most complete expression in mankind, who, as we shall see, is the intended goal of creation.

The *Shekinah*, as the last *Sefirah* in the *Bahir* system, is placed within the world and is closely bound to mankind (Wolfson, "Hebraic" 169). Representing the most immanent aspect of the divine structure, it is metaphorically linked in a father-daughter relationship to the most transcendent of the *Sefirot*, *Keter*. As the daughter of *Keter* and the vessel for the human souls originating in *Hokmah*, the *Shekinah* bears the more transcendent aspects of God into the world, thereby symbolizing God's presence within it (Kiener, Idel, and Dan 64). In addition, by virtue of coming last within the system, she is said to receive from all of the *Sefirot* that precede her (Kaplan 160).

In regard to *Shekinah*'s relationship with mankind, she is described as Abraham's bride.[17] The marriage between the *Shekinah* and Abraham is symbolic of God's commitment to mankind through the establishment of the covenant. Although this union occurs initially with Abraham, it extends to all souls born subsequent to his covenant with God (Scholem, *Origins* 168). Collectively, these souls are referred to as *Kineset Yisrael* and are symbolically married/joined to the presence of God (*Shekinah*) by virtue

---

[17] In later Kabbalist tradition, for example, the *Zohar*, it is Moses who weds the *Shekinah*. Once joined, Moses ascends to the place of *Tiferet* in the Sefirotic structure. The importance of Abraham in the *Bahir* stems from the prominent position that he held in the *Sefer Yetsirah* (for which the *Bahir* is a commentary).

of the covenant with Abraham (Ripsman 111). In addition, because marriage represents

the complete union of the male and female in the *Bahir* (Scholem *Origins* 172), *Kineset*

Yisrael becomes equated with the *Shekinah.* Through the coming together of her roles as

the vessel of divine/human souls and the souls themselves, the presence of God within

the world, and the divine counterpart of the covenant between man and God, the

Shekinah represents the concomitance of God and man within the world. For this reason,

when discussing the goal of creation in the section that follows, much of what is said

about the *Shekinah* is often equally relevant to mankind.

Verse 16 of the *Bahir* states that the creation of man and God's covenant with him

was determined at an early stage of the creative process:

It is thus written (*Genesis 1:3*), "And God said, 'let there be light,' and there was

light." They said to Him, "Before the creation of Israel your son, will you then

make him a crown?" He replied yes. What does this resemble? A king yearned for

a son. One day he found a beautiful, precious crown, and he said, 'This is fitting

for my son's head' (Kaplan 7).

The placement in the passage of God's intention to create man immediately after the

description of the creation/emanation of light is consistent with the *Bahir* system in

which *Hokmah*/light precedes mankind. The creation of man's "crown" before the

creation of man points to man's priority within the Divine plan and the special place he

will hold later when the covenant is established. In the quotation, the covenant is alluded

to as "Israel" whose forefather is Abraham. Without Abraham's covenant, Israel would

not have been born with a divinely imparted soul, and thus, would not be worthy of a

"crown." The creation of mankind and its special position in relation to creation are inextricably linked with the concept of the covenant.

In addition, through the *Shekinah*, mankind and the world conclude the creative sequence. Verse 23 of the *Bahir* indicates that the entire structure of the *Sefirot* was made with their culmination in mind:

> Rabbi Rahumai said: From your words we could conclude that the needs of this world were created before the heavens. He answered yes. What does this resemble? A king wanted to plant a tree in his garden. He searched the entire garden to find a spring flowing with water that would nourish the tree, but could not find any. He then said 'I will dig for water, and will bring forth a spring to nourish the tree' (Kaplan 9).

This passage describes the creation of the world as having a higher priority than that of the "heavens," i.e., the *Sefirot* (excluding *Shekinah*). The tree symbolizes the *Shekinah,* the spring, *Yesod,* and the water through which it flows, *Hokmah* (Scholem, *Origins* 159). In line with the conception of *Hokmah* as pre-existent to creation, the water that nourishes the tree precedes it, requiring only that a "spring" be "dug" so to place the tree in sustaining contact with it. The spring representing *Yesod* symbolizes the covenant made with Abraham. Through this covenant, the logos flows through to the fruits of the tree, which are the souls of mankind. Here again, the covenant plays a vital role in the relationship between the divine and mankind.

The *Shekinah*, by virtue of being the last and only *Sefirah* present in the world, is considered separate from the rest of the structure. Eliot Ginsburg notes that the *Shekinah* "assumes a kind of liminal role in the divine pleroma, alternately bound to and separated

from the rest of the Godhead" (Ginsburg 7). Verse 54 of the *Bahir* describes this bounded

separateness as the parting that occurs between a father and his newly married daughter:

> Is it possible for the king to ever leave his daughter? You will agree that it is not.
>
> Is it possible for him to be with her constantly? You will agree that it is not. What
>
> can he then do? He can place a window between the two, and whenever the father
>
> needs the daughter, or the daughter needs the father, they can come together
>
> through the window (Kaplan 20).

Previously, it was noted that *Keter* represents the most transcendent aspect of God and

the *Shekinah* the most immanent; therefore, the relationship between them illustrates the

solution of the *Bahir* to the problem of transcendence and the immanence of God. The

metaphor of the *Shekinah*, the daughter once close with her father *Keter* and now separate

from him through her marriage to mankind, parallels the relationship between man and

God whereby God becomes transcendent after man is given physical form.[18] By way of

this metaphor, the expanse between the transcendent and immanent aspects of God—be it

Keter/Shekinah or God/man—is bridged through the installation of a symbolic "window"

that allows the distance between them to be traversed (Scholem, *Origins* 171). The

window is placed between the highest and lowest of the *Sefirot* (*Keter-Shekinah*); yet

because the window is placed between them for the sake of the "separated daughter," the

window comes to specifically represent the daughter/*Shekinah*. Here again, the cause and

effect of the *Shekinah* are synthesized. Furthermore, because the *Shekinah* represents the

collective souls of mankind, *Kineset Israel*, the window that she symbolizes is said to

exist within the soul of man as well (Kaplan 54).

---

[18] In *Origins of Kabbalah*, Gershom Scholem discusses the gnostic tendencies within the *Bahir*. According to him, the *Shekinah* represents the divine wisdom fallen into materiality and separated from her divine source (*Origins* 93).

Through the special intermediary position that the *Shekinah* holds between the higher levels of God and mankind, she becomes the medium through which man can know God. According to the *Bahir*, God created the world for "His Glory,"[19] which alternately can be understood as *Hokmah*/God's Wisdom (Kiener, Idel, and Dan 63) or the *Shekinah* (Kaplan 142). In the *Bahir*, whether referring to the source of the soul or the last *Sefirah* through which it enters the world, God's Glory is closely linked with the concept of the human soul. The following excerpt elucidates the way by which the *Shekinah* leads the mystically minded to acquire knowledge of God. Verse 63 reads:

> The heart (Lev) [in numerical value] is thirty two. These are concealed, and with
> them the world was created. What are these 32? He said: These are the 32 Paths.
> This is like a king who was in the innermost of many chambers. The number of
> such chambers was 32, and to each one there was a path. Should the king then
> bring everyone to his chamber through these paths? You will agree that he should
> not. Should he reveal his jewels, his tapestries, his hidden and concealed secrets?
> You will again agree that he should not. What then does he do? He touches the
> Daughter, and includes all the paths in her and her garments. One who wants to
> go inside should gaze there (Kaplan 23).

The 32 paths refer to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet combined with the 10 *Sefirot*.[20] This number is associated with the *Shekinah,* since it is the numerical value of the Hebrew word for Glory, *Kavod,* which, as previously noted, is associated with this *Sefirah* (Dan et al. 65). In addition, the number 32, when broken down into its constituent

---

[19] "*All* that is called by My name, for my glory I created it, I formed it, also I made it" (*Isaiah 43:7* qtd. in Kaplan 29).

[20] The 32 paths mentioned are precedent in the *Sefer Yetsirah*. In this *Merkebah* text, the paths are associated with the *Shekinah* that in this system represented the highest level of knowledge available to mankind, symbolized by the Throne (Scholem, *Origins* 139 and Dan et al. 65).

parts, makes reference to the *Shekinah* as: a) the Oral *Torah* made up of the 22 Hebrew letters, embodying the logos on a microcosmic/lesser scale to its counterpart in *Binah* – the Primordial *Torah* and b) the tenth *Sefirah* that receives from the nine that precede it. The 32 paths are described as the basis of all creation concealed within the "garments" of the "Daughter," and through these paths, man attains knowledge of God (Schafer, "Daughter" 224). This image points to the immanence of the logos within creation, since by metaphorically peeling away the layers of creation,[21] one gains knowledge of God. This knowledge is described as accessing the "chambers," the center of which houses *Keter*—the king and most transcendent aspect of the system.

Similar to the system of the *Bahir*, Ibn al-Arabi places mankind at the end of the creative spectrum. In his chapter on Mohammed in the *Fusūs al-Hikam*, Ibn al-Arabi states: "His is the wisdom of singularity because he is the most perfect creation of this humankind, for which reason the whole affair [of creation] begins and ends with him. He was a prophet when Adam was still between the water and the clay…" (Austin 272). In this statement, Ibn al-Arabi makes reference to the prophet Mohammad as the beginning and end of creation. As the beginning of creation, Mohammed is the metaphysical logos/Mohammedan Reality (Affifi 70). In this form, he serves as the prototype for the rest of creation and is made manifest into Adam as the first Perfect Man. Ibn al-Arabi posits that although Adam was the first complete manifestation of the divine names, Mohammed epitomizes the most complete manifestation (Nettler 177). For this reason, he represents the ultimate goal of creation known as *al-kawn al-jāmi*, meaning "the all-comprehensive engendered thing" (Chittick, SD 171). The distinction between Adam and

---

[21] Removing the clothing of the Princess/*Shekinah* is a recurring metaphor in the *Zohar*, a later Kabbalist text (Wolfson, *Speculum* 386).

Mohammed is attributed to their knowledge of the names: Adam is described as having known the Divine Names, and Mohammed as having known the Names *as well as* their esoteric meanings (Nettler 180). Furthermore, for Ibn al-Arabi, Mohammed's role as the last prophet attests to the extensive nature of his message/law, which is the culmination of all of the teachings, prophets, and holy writs that preceded him (Chittick, SPK 239).

Another aspect of the Perfect Man is his intermediate position between God and the Cosmos, a concept Ibn al-Arabi refers to as the *barzakh*. The term is recurrent in Ibn al-Arabi's work and applies to various intermediary structures or regions, such as the logos, the Divine Names, and the imaginal world. The current study focuses on the concept as it relates to the Perfect Man. Michel Chodkiewicz defines the term *barzakh* as "any medial place, any intermediate state, anything that separates and unites two things at the same time" (*Ocean* 84). Accordingly, that which man separates and unites through his dual nature is the divine and cosmic aspects within him. As the point of convergence for these two aspects of reality, the Perfect Man also represents the instance of their synthesis (Hall 41). Ibn al-Arabi states in his *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah*: "The perfect human being brings together the form of the Real and the form of the cosmos. He is a *barzakh* between the Real and the cosmos, a raised up mirror" (Chittick, SD 249). The Perfect Man as a "raised up mirror" is actually a two-sided mirror reflecting both the Cosmos and God. It should be noted that although Ibn al-Arabi places emphasis on the divine nature of man, his philosophy is not world-negating, since the cosmos represents God's physical form and is understood as one of His many facets. Through his own physical nature, the Perfect Man reflects this outer form of God/Cosmos, while his spiritual form—as the

comprehensive manifestation of the Divine Names—reflects God's inner form (Izutsu, 234).

By way of describing this dual nature of man, Ibn al-Arabi refers to the *barzakh* as having two faces, each of which is vital to its existence:

A *barzakh* is only a *barzakh* when it has two faces, one each toward the two things between which it is a *barzakh*... everything that has come into existence at an occasion has a face toward its occasion and a face toward God, so it is a *barzakh* between the occasion and God (Chittick, SD 271).

By "occasion," Ibn al-Arabi refers to anything that depends on something else for its existence (Chittick, SD 124); as a result, the perfected human being in its role as a *barzakh* has a face turned towards his or her own existence within the physical world, as well as a face turned toward its origin in God. Mankind attains knowledge of God through realizing that he possesses this dual nature, seeing within himself the inner and outer form of God (Bashier 92).

In addition to realizing his/her *barzakhī* nature, the perfected person through his/her all-comprehensive nature, in regard to the manifestation of the names, remains the only thing in creation that can truly represent and have knowledge of God (Chittick, SD 132). On this, Ibn al-Arabi states: "Hence everyone in the cosmos is ignorant of the whole and knows the part, except only the perfect human being. For God *taught* him *the names, all of them* [2:31] and gave him the all comprehensive words, so his form became perfect" (Chittick, SD 249). Not all human beings can become perfected human beings, although theoretically, all have the opportunity to become the "folk of God" or mystics. According to Ibn al-Arabi, a divine attribute is the basis of each person at a given

moment, the realization of which leads to mystical knowledge. However, only a select few are perfected by manifesting all attributes at once (Izutsu 112). As mentioned previously, the Names manifested in man and the cosmos are the medium for God's Self-Disclosure. Through the manifestation of His Divine Attributes, God gains a reference point outside of His undifferentiated Essence allowing for Self-Knowledge (Nettler 20). The Perfect Man's role in this divine pursuit allows him/her to participate in the acquisition of the divine's knowledge or knowledge of the divine.

The parallel nature of the *Shekinah/*mankind of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Perfect Man based on the preceding discussion is fourfold. First, both are described as the goals of creation due to the fact that they are the only created things to receive the divine investiture of God's spirit/logos. Second, by virtue of their late arrival within the creative process, they represent the apex of creation, comprising all aspects of the logos that precede them. In this sense, both represent the complete manifestations of God's Attributes. The third similarity lies in the dual nature they share. The *Shekinah*/souls of mankind and the Perfect Man each possess a cosmic and a divine element, metaphorically described as two sides of a window or dual-sided mirror. This allots each an intermediary status, allowing them to bridge the transcendent and immanent aspects of God from within themselves. In each system, the dual nature of mankind allows it to exist within the mundane world while maintaining a close connection with the spiritual world. The fourth similarity between the *Shekinah*/mankind and the Perfect Man relates to their role in acquiring knowledge of God through creation. Each represents the microcosmic and most complete logos manifested (the 32 paths or the Divine Names), thus becoming the nearest and most comprehensive path to obtain knowledge of God from within creation.

After having illustrated the general position of mankind within the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought, the current study turns to a discussion of the *Tzaddik* (i.e., Righteous One) of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Perfect Man as particular individuals. Through their roles as the microcosm, the embodiment of the logos, the goal of creation, and the way to knowledge of God, these figures are said to uphold the cosmos and represent the divine within it. Although the concept of the *Tzaddik* or Righteous One was not fully developed in the *Bahir,* certain prototypic aspects, comparable to Ibn al-Arabi's Perfect Man, are nevertheless evident. Therefore, references to *Tzaddik* in the section that follows represent the concept only as a precursor to what is further developed in the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah. In the *Bahir,* both Abraham and Moses[22] serve as precursors to the concept of the *Tzaddik*; however, the current study focuses on Abraham alone given that it has already described others aspects of his role.

Previously discussed was the marriage of Abraham and the *Shekinah* through the covenant symbolized by *Yesod.* However, the *Shekinah* also is referred to as Abraham's daughter[23] given to him by God. Verse 78 states:

> Where do we see that Abraham had a daughter? It is written (*Genesis 24:1*), 'And God blessed Abraham with all (*BaKol*).' It is also written (*Isaiah 43:7*), 'All that is called by My name, for My glory I created it, I formed it, also I made it.' Was this blessing his daughter, or was it not? Yes, it was his daughter (Kaplan 28-29).

Here, the term "All" applies to both *Yesod* and the *Shekinah*, since through their relationship, they are conceived of as one entity.[24] Where the "All" is applied to *Yesod,*

---

[22] An example of Moses as a *Tzaddik*-figure can be seen in the *Bahir*, verses 135-138 (Kaplan 49-51) where he is described as "drawing down" divine blessings, thereby making Israel victorious.

[23] The *Bahir* describes the *Shekinah* as both daughter and bride, and often, these roles are conflated/confused, seeming incestual at times (see Wolfson *Hebraic*, 160).

"God blessed Abraham with All" refers to the covenant. In addition, God's creation of the "All" for His "Glory" suggests that the covenant was created specifically for the *Shekinah*/God's presence in the world. This description accords with the *Bahiric* view of the covenant as the method by which the divine enters the world in the form of souls passing through *Yesod*/Abraham and embodied in the *Shekinah* as *Kineset Israel*. Alternately, where the "All" refers to *Shekinah*, it indicates that God's divine presence within creation was given to Abraham (Scholem, *Origins* 88).

Whether as father and daughter or husband and wife, the union between *Yesod* and the *Shekinah* and the relationship between them becomes the way by which the divine sustains the world. Verse 22 reads:

I am the One who planted this tree in order that all the world should delight in it. And in it, I spread All. I called it All because all depend on it, all emanate from it and all need it. To it they look, for it they wait, and from it souls fly in joy… I was alone when I spread out My earth, in which I planted and rooted this tree. I made them rejoice together, and I rejoiced in them (Kaplan 9).

Here the *Bahir* describes the union between the earth and the tree, symbolizing *Shekinah* and *Yesod*. In the current study's previous discussion of the tree in verse 23, *Yesod* was the spring that was dug to infuse the tree with the logos; thus, *Yesod* becomes the tree itself planted within the (feminine) earth/*Shekinah* (Wolfson *Path* 72). The "All" that is spread throughout creation represents God's logos immanent in creation/the earth/*Shekinah* through the conduit of *Yesod*/covenant/Abraham.

---

[24] Relating to this same passage, Wolfson notes the inclusion of the female "Glory" within the male "All" (*Hebraic* 167).

Due to the central position that *Yesod* holds within the structure of the *Sefirot* as well as its phallic nature as the conduit of souls, it comes to be associated with the concept of uprightness or righteousness (Wolfson *Path* 74). For this reason, the term *Tzaddik* (the Righteous One) is said to refer to *Yesod*. Within the *Bahir* the term *Tzaddik* can refer both to a single person (Scholem, *Origins* 155) and an attribute/aspect of God (Green, "Axis" 333). In either case, *Tzaddik* is defined as the "Foundation of the world" that maintains the relationship between the cosmos and mankind:

> The 'Righteous, Foundation of the world' is in the center… In its hand are also
> the souls of all living things. It is the Life of the Worlds. Whenever the word
> 'creation' *(Beriah)* is used, it is done with it. Regarding it it is written *(Exodus
> 20:8)*, 'He rested and souled.' This is the attribute of the Sabbath day (Kaplan 70).

Here, the *Tzaddik* is described as holding the souls of all living things within himself. In addition, the *Tzaddik*'s intermediary position between God and creation as the conduit of the divine makes him the source and "Life of the worlds" (Ginsburg 80). In this role, he becomes the requirement for creation to take place; as such, he is described as the tool through which creation occurs, not unlike an embodiment of the *Torah*/logos (Scholem, *Origins* 157). Due to the pivotal role of the *Tzaddik* in creation, he is said to uphold the cosmos by virtue of his presence within it (157). Regarding the *Tzaddik* as the upholder, verse 102 of the *Bahir* states:

> There is a single pillar that reaches from earth to heaven and zaddiq is its name. It
> is named for the zaddiqim. When there are zaddiqim in the world it is
> strengthened; when there are not, it becomes weak. It bears the entire world, as
> Scripture says: "Zaddiq is the foundation of the world" (Prov. 10:25). If it is

weakened, the world cannot exist. For that reason, the world is sustained even by

the presence of a single zaddiq within it (Green, "Axis" 333).

The righteous uphold the *Torah* and so merit the birth of more souls from the divine

(Scholem, *Origins* 80). The birth of these souls occurs on the Sabbath,[25] leading to the

advent of the Messiah who will initiate the redemption as well as the world to come

(Wolfson, *Path* 87). The next world represents the greatest opportunity to obtain

knowledge of God, since six of the seven parts of the light of *Keter* are housed there (this

world containing only one part) (Kaplan 59).

Ibn al-Arabi's Perfect Man, like the *Tzaddik,* is said to uphold the cosmos by

virtue of his presence within it. His ability to do so is linked to his nature as the locus of

the divine Self-Disclosure. This upholding is expressed in the following excerpt from the

chapter on Adam in Ibn al-Arabi's *Fusūs al-Hikam*: "It is by his existence that the

Cosmos subsists and he is, in relation to the Cosmos, as the seal is to the ring, the seal

being that place whereon is engraved the token with which the King seals his treasure"

(Austin 51). The significance of the "seal" is diverse, touching on a number of concepts

previously considered in the current study. The analogy of the seal and treasure illustrates

the relationship between mankind and the cosmos. Here, the Perfect Man as the jewel set

in the ring of the cosmos represents its ultimate purpose and fruition. In addition, the seal

indicates through the divine names "engraved" upon it the inner nature of the Perfect

Man as their embodiment and logos (Nicholson 156). This nature signifies his role within

creation as well as the soul of the cosmos reflecting the inner nature of God. The seal

itself denotes the Owner of the treasure/cosmos, but also, by virtue of it being placed

---

[25] The *Tzaddik* and the Sabbath both hold the seventh position within their respective structures, and so they are equated. In addition, as the *Tzaddik* sustains the cosmos, the Sabbath sustains the rest of the week (Ginsburg 69).

within the Perfect Man, signifies man's authority as Regent (*khalīfa*) over creation (156).

Here, the seal represents the divine endorsement of the Perfect Man. For these reasons,

the Perfect Man is said to uphold the cosmos, for without him, it remains incomplete,

without soul, purpose, and the presence of God that he reflects within himself.

In the *Fusūs al-Hikam,* Ibn al-Arabi explains that God created man and the

cosmos for his Self-Disclosure. To gain knowledge of Himself beyond the insularity of

self-reflection, God chose to create a reference point outside of Himself (Nettler 20).

Concerning this Self-Disclosure, Ibn al-Arabi states:

> The Real wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it
>
> another way, to see His Own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the
>
> whole [divine] command… For the seeing of a thing, itself by itself, is not the
>
> same as its seeing itself in another…. (Austin 50).

In this passage, Ibn al-Arabi makes reference to the externalized and emanative aspect of

creation through the manifestation of the names into the "all-inclusive object"—the

Perfect Man—which becomes the way by which God sees Himself. The sight that is

gained through the locus of the Perfect Man in the moment of Self-Disclosure coincides

with the moment that the Perfect Man seeks and realizes his inner nature as a reflection of

the divine (Bashier 92). At this point, what Michael Sells refers to as a "perspective shift"

occurs whereby man's consciousness is replaced by God's, who then sees Himself

outside of Himself and within His position in the Perfect Man (Sells 73).[26] At this stage,

---

[26] According to Ibn al-Arabi, the cosmos is in a state of constant renewal. Thus, the moment of Self-Disclosure within the Perfect Man does not endure indefinitely, i.e., he does regain his own human consciousness.

any distinction between the two and the *barzakh*/intermediary nature of the Perfect Man dissolves, leaving behind only God's presence (Bashier 90).[27]

By means of this "perspective shift," the moment of the Self-Disclosure within the Perfect Man finalizes the manifestation of God within creation. According to Ibn al-Arabi's system, the divine names that make up all of creation lie dormant as potentials within the Perfect Man (nonmanifest) until this moment of realization, when they become manifest in the Self-Disclosure (Little 47). At this point, that which was previously external or unknown to God becomes known to Him, and His Presence re-enters the cosmos through the Perfect Man (Corbin 183). It should be noted that although the Self-Disclosure of God occurs through the inner nature of the Perfect Man, it does not exclude the Cosmos. This understanding is attested to in that the Perfect Man represents the "polishing of the mirror" (which is the cosmos) and is not himself the mirror. As a result, where the Perfect Man initiates the divine Self-Disclosure, he extends the locus of it to include all of creation. In doing so, through his intermediate and ultimately intercessory status, he represents the *qutb* or pole that unites God and the cosmos (Hall 42).

Based on the preceding discussion, four points of similarity between the *Tzaddik* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Perfect Man can be isolated: both uphold creation; both represent God on earth; both bring about a return to God that allows for greater knowledge of Him; and both include a bi-directional divine flow between man and God that occurs within them.

Thus far, the current study has illustrated how both the *Tzaddik* and Perfect Man uphold the cosmos. For example, both the *Tzaddik* and Perfect Man are given positions of

---

[27] Since the individual's consciousness is superseded by God's, this moment is known as *fanāʾ* or annihilation and denotes "passing away in God" (Sells 74). After this moment has passed, the Perfect Man is able to witness the constant renewal of the cosmos (Izutsu 260).

responsibility towards creation. In the case of the *Tzaddik* as the person of Abraham, he is given the daughter/all that represents the world where the souls he contains are deposited. In the case of the Perfect Man, by virtue of his being the seal and embodiment of the logos, he is given the position of Regent over the cosmos. In both cases, the responsibility is divinely given, making both figures the representatives of God on earth. In this function, the *Tzaddik* and Perfect Man act as intermediaries/intercessors between the divine and the cosmic, symbolically represented as supporting pillars and poles.

Furthermore, based on the divine inner nature of the *Tzaddik*/Perfect Man, the pillar/pole image denotes the divine flowing through these individuals into the world. In the case of the *Tzaddik*, this flowing occurs through the souls that he holds and channels into the world/*Shekinah*. Similarly, the Perfect Man in his pre-manifest form channels the divine names into the world through his nature as the embodiment of the logos, i.e., the blueprint of creation (Singh 278), as well as through the moment of divine Self-Disclosure in which he momentarily becomes the vessel of God's consciousness. In both cases, this divine flow ultimately brings about alternate/future existence within another world where greater knowledge of God is attained.

In the *Bahir,* the flow of the souls through the *Tzaddik* (brought about through the righteous upholding the *Torah*) eventually channels the Messiah into this world, bringing about the redemption and the next world where the majority of the logos/light is stored. Here we see an example of the bi-directional flow between God and man, whereby man upholds the *Torah* and then receives more souls from the divine realm, culminating in the advent of the Messiah/redemption (see *Bahir* verse 184, cited in Kaplan 70). In the case of the Perfect Man, through the moment of Self-Disclosure, he gains access to the "next

world" where he witnesses the perpetual renewal of the cosmos, simultaneously seeing and not seeing God in all things (Corbin 207). His efforts to recognize the divine within him draw the divine down into his being, serving as another example of the bi-directional relationship between God and man.

To conclude the discussion of the role of mankind within creation according to the *Bahir* and *Ibn al-Arabi*, the current study has illustrated that man in both systems possesses an intrinsically divine nature that is fed from the highest emanation of the divine into the world. In both systems, the divine inner nature of man represents the descent of the divine from transcendence into immanence. This divine descent is paralleled in man the microcosm, whereby he must descend into his own soul to discover (by way of the 32 paths or the divine Names) the presence of God within. Thus, the paths of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Names, which serve as the means of the divine descent into creation, are also the means of human ascent into knowledge of God.

In both systems, the immanence within mankind and creation is tempered by the concept of divine transcendence. In the case of the *Bahir*, the highest *Sefirah Keter* remains generally unattainable and unknowable except through the two succeeding stages of creation—the *Sefirot Hokmah* (Divine Wisdom) and *Binah* (the beginning of manifestation). In addition, not all of the light/logos in *Hokmah* is made manifest into mankind/the cosmos at once. It descends into mankind only and is based on his living by the *Torah*. As such, the flow of the divine is controlled, maintaining a degree of transcendence. It also should be remembered that the majority of God's Wisdom/*Hokmah* is housed in the "world to come" whose inaccessibility until the Messiah/redemption denotes further transcendence.

In the case of Ibn al-Arabi's system, the transcendence is maintained in that the Most Holy Emanation from the Essence to the Names contained in the Mohammedan Reality and the Perfect Man represent only a partial emanation. Accordingly, the Essence remains ever beyond, and the knowledge attained by the Perfect Man reflects only the names or the all-comprehensive name but never knowledge of the Essence. In addition, when the Perfect Man gains access to knowledge of God in the moment of Self-Disclosure, he is said to "pass away" in it, meaning that he ceases to experience it as an individual being. As such, it is difficult to say whether it is he or God that experiences the moment of Self-Disclosure.[28] In this case, transcendence is maintained in the ambiguity of who is experiencing what aspect of the Self-Disclosure (Sells 73). When Ibn al-Arabi does describe man as experiencing the divine Self-Disclosure within himself, man obtains only a momentary glimpse; after the moment has passed, the transcendence of the divine remains.

---

[28] At times, Ibn al-Arabi suggests that only God experiences the moment, while at others points, he suggests that the Perfect Man also experiences it.

Chapter Two: A Pole of Transcendence

Within their respective systems, both the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi maintain an aspect of the divine that is impersonal and unknowable, which resembles the Neo-platonic One. Represented by the *Sefirah Keter* in the *Bahir* and the Essence[29] in Ibn al-Arabi's system, each signifies the highest and most transcendent level of the Divine. Both represent the point of origin of their respective emanative systems, containing the complete potential of the cosmos. Through this potential, *Keter* and the Essence represent the source of the cosmos, as well as the basis of creation, each being actualized where it is emanated and manifested into creation. This process leads to an apparently contradictory situation in which the transcendent becomes immanent within creation.

The procession from transcendence to immanence is important to both systems, since it is the means by which mankind, from its position of immanence, can attain knowledge of the transcendent divine. However, by conceptualizing the transcendent as immanent, these authors appear to negate the initial transcendence, producing a paradox. The author(s) of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi resolve this issue in a similar manner by devising methods to maintain the transcendence of the divine, while simultaneously allowing for its immanence within creation.

The position of *Keter* is the highest point within the cosmological structure of the *Bahir*.[30] Since it precedes all emanation and manifestation within the Sefirotic system, it

---

[29] Although several equivalent terms exist in Ibn al-Arabi's system (e.g., the Real, the Nonmanifest, the Independent), for the sake of clarity, I will the use of the term Essence.

[30] While no entity exists above the *Keter* in the *Bahir*, certain aspects of its description are later used in the *Zohar,* leading to the development of the concept of *Eyn Sof,* which describes a transcendent God above and beyond the structure of the *Sefirot* (Scholem, *Origins* 132).

exists outside of time and is eternal (Scholem, *Origins* 132). From the position of *Keter*

in eternity, it is said to contain the potential of all that proceeds from it (128). In this

sense, it is the most independent of the *Sefirot*, requiring no precursor for its existence.

As the inner potential of the cosmos, *Keter* signifies the divine, secret, and eternal

thought that leads to the emanative act of creation (127). Regarding *Keter* as the divine

thought process, Aryeh Kaplan says: "The first *Sefirah* is called the Crown, since a

Crown is worn above the head. The Crown therefore refers to things that are above the

mind's abilities of comprehension" (91). By describing *Keter* as something beyond

comprehension, Kaplan notes the inaccessibility that maintains its transcendence (ibid).

As the secret thought of God, *Keter* remains unknowable to mankind, until it gives form

to the successive emanations within the Sefirotic structure. For this reason, *Hokmah*, the

first emanation from *Keter*, is referred to as "the beginning," whereas *Keter* is referred to

as Nothingness (Scholem, *Origins* 132). Nothingness further connotes the transcendence

of *Keter* as the action-less or static origin of a dynamic and emanative system.

   In Ibn al-Arabi's system, the Essence also is eternal, existing beyond time and

creation. It holds within it the potential for all subsequent emanations, and thus, it is the

requirement of all that proceeds from it (Chittick, SPK 41). For this reason, Ibn al-Arabi

describes the Essence as the Independent (*ghinā*), and the rest of creation as the

dependant (*faqr*). As dependent entities, human beings can say nothing of the Essence,

except to emphasize its dissimilarity from anything else in existence (Chittick, SPK 50).

The Essence is eternal and without limit; as such, any knowledge of it remains beyond

the cognitive abilities of dependant beings. In his treatise on the *Majesty and Beauty*,[31] Ibn al-Arabi states:

> As for Absolute Majesty, no created being possesses any means of entering into it or bearing witness to it. The Truth has singled it out for Himself… Were we to have a means of entering into this, we would possess a comprehensive knowledge of Allah and all that is with Him, and this is impossible (Harris 8).

In this passage, Ibn al-Arabi affirms that knowledge of the Essence (here referred to as the Absolute Majesty and Truth) is completely transcendent and inaccessible to mankind. He also indicates the proximity of the potential things to the Essence, where reference is made to "all that is with Him."[32] The reason mankind is unable to acquire knowledge of the Essence is also implied in this passage. The inaccessibility of the Essence lies in the fundamental difference between the transcendent and the immanent. By virtue of being created, human beings are singled out from a totality and thus represent limitation. Their nature as limited beings makes it impossible for them to contain knowledge of the unlimited Essence (Chittick, SD 167).

Thus, the *Keter* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Essence are described in similar terms. Both are said to exist beyond time, and both represent the unlimited potential of all that emanates from them into creation. From this position, they remain transcendent and independent, while all created things depend on them. Due to the fundamental difference between the transcendent and the immanent, the divine and created, and the independent

---

[31] The Arabic title for this text is *Kitāb al-Jalāl wa-l Jamāl.*
[32] More specifically and according to Ibn al-Arabi, the Essence includes the potential of both the possible and impossible (Chittick SD 239). By suggesting that the Essence contains both the possible and impossible, Ibn al-Arabi ensures its comprehensiveness and maintains its unity.

and dependants, mankind in its contingent and limited state is conceived of by both systems as unable to grasp the reality of the transcendent.

Knowledge of the transcendent is not only unattainable, but both systems caution man against attempts to even discern it. Verse 49 of the *Bahir* states:

> Which is the third? On this subject that old man said to that child: that which seems too wondrous for you, do not explore it, and that which is hidden from you, do not dig for it: seek understanding in that which is permitted to you and do not meddle with secrets (Scholem, *Origins* 124).

Here, the *Bahir* says that one should not seek knowledge at the level of *Keter*; instead, one should commence from the third *Sefirah, Binah* (Kaplan 118). Here, *Keter* is alluded to by the synonyms "hidden" and "secret," which also are used to refer to it elsewhere in the *Bahir*. Similarly, *Binah* is referred to as "understanding" or "the third" and also represents the beginning of manifestation. Therefore, where the passage counsels that one should "seek understanding in that which is permitted to you," it also indicates that knowledge of the divine is available only insofar as it emerges from the manifest. In this passage,[33] the *Bahir* makes anything beyond the manifestation in *Binah* inaccessible, thereby maintaining the transcendence of the *Sefirot* that precede it (*Keter* and *Hokmah*).

Ibn al-Arabi similarly cautions mankind against endeavours to acquire knowledge of the Essence. According to the Andalusian mystic, an adequate basis exists in the Quran to legally prohibit contemplation of the Essence: "God has commanded us to gain knowledge of the declaration of His Unity, but He has not commanded us to know His

---

[33] The *Bahir* is not consistent in defining the highest level of knowledge man can attain. At certain points, man's knowledge is described as ascending to *Hokmah* (the second *Sefirah*) and possibly even *Keter*. Where *Keter* is attained in verse 63, it is achieved through the last and most immanent *Sefirah*—*Shekinah*.

Essence. On the contrary, He forbade that with His words, 'God warns you about His Self' (3:28)" (Chittick, SPK 233). The knowledge available to mankind is described as only that which has been permitted by God. The Essence is excluded from the permitted knowledge of the divine, maintaining its transcendence. However, some knowledge of the divine remains possible from the stage at which it becomes manifest in the divine Names. Regarding this knowledge, Ibn al-Arabi states:

> Inaccessibility[34] requires that true knowledge of Him cannot be attained. Glorification is a declaration of incomparability. It is not a laudation through a positive quality. He cannot be lauded except through that which is worthy of Him. But that which belongs to Him is not shared in common with anything. He can only be lauded through His Names… (Chittick SPK, 71).

The Essence is described as completely dissimilar from anything created. Ibn al-Arabi says: "that which belongs to Him is not shared in common with anything." As such, no basis or common ground exists with the creation with which the Essence can maintain a relationship. According to Ibn al-Arabi, it is only through the manifestation of the divine Names that mankind can begin to interact with the divine (Chittick, SPK 9). Through the manifestation of the Names and their role as the basis for all of creation, they become the common ground between the Essence and the cosmos, allowing for their interaction. The Names as the attributes of God provide man with positive knowledge of God (i.e., knowledge that posits God's traits), which allows him to perceive and praise Him (Izutsu

---

[34] Inaccessibility refers to "Glory be to thy lord, the Lord of inaccessibility, above what they describe" (*Quran* 37:180, qtd. in Chittick, SPK 71).

40). Within Ibn al-Arabi's system, knowledge of God is impossible without the manifestation of the divine Names.

A pattern of similarity has emerged in the prohibitions against the reflection on the divine transcendence described by the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi. Each conveys the idea that mankind only can perceive God from the point at which He begins to manifest Himself into the cosmos. In the case of the *Bahir*, this begins with the *Sefirah Binah,* and in the case of Ibn al-Arabi, with the manifestation of the divine Names. In addition, both contain an element of warning, in that the *Bahir* says that one should not "meddle" with the "secrets," and Ibn al-Arabi finds the basis for the prohibition against speculation about the Essence within the *Sharī'a*. Elsewhere, Ibn al-Arabi warns "He said not to pursue what you cannot know—those who consider [the Essence] are in danger…" (Chittick, SD 55).

That the *Keter* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Essence are similarly described as existing beyond the constraints of human knowledge and as prohibited subjects for contemplation serves to emphasize the distance and dissimilarity between mankind and the divine. However, as explained previously, both systems also describe the manifestation of the transcendent into creation, rendering it present, yet concealed. To this theme, the current study now turns.

The tenth verse of the *Bahir* describes the concealment of *Keter* within the world in the following terms:

> Rabbi Bun said: What is the meaning of the verse (*Proverbs 8:23*), "I was set up from eternity (*Me-Olam*), from a head, before the earth?" What is the meaning of "from eternity (*Me-Olam*)?" This means that it must be concealed (*He-elam*) from

the world. It is thus written (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*), "He has also placed the world (*Ha-Olam*) in their hearts [that they should not find out the work that God has done from the beginning to the end]." Do not read *Ha-Olam* (the world), but *He-elam* (concealment) (Kaplan 5).

The subject of this passage in *Proverbs* is the *Torah*, which according to the *Bahir* system can be equated with the Divine Wisdom of the second *Sefirah*, *Hokmah* (Kaplan 96). Here, we revisit the concept of *Keter* as the "head" from which the *Torah* emanates into the *Sefirah, Hokmah*. According to Kaplan, the terms for eternity and universe (*Olam)*, share the same Hebrew root with the term for concealment (*Elam*) (96). Based on the relatedness of these terms, it is inferred that *Keter* is the concealed and eternal source of the universe. Here, the concealment of *Keter* is described as also occurring within the hearts of mankind. Although *Keter* is brought close to creation through its immanence, its concealment within creation ensures its continuing transcendence as the invisible source of the universe.

Keter also is described as the transcendent concealed within creation where it is referred to as the light that underlies and permeates creation. The first verse of the *Bahir* states:

> Rabbi Nehuniah ben HaKana said: One verse (Job 37:21) states, "And now they do not see light, it is brilliant (*Bahir*) in the skies…[round about God in terrible majesty]." Another verse, however, (*Psalm 18:12*), states, "He made darkness His hiding place." It is also written (*Psalm 97:2*), "Cloud and gloom surround Him." This is an apparent contradiction. A third verse comes and reconciles the two. It is

written (*Psalm 139:12*), "Even darkness is not dark to You. Night shines like

day—light and darkness are the same" (Kaplan 1).

This passage begins with *Keter* at the height of its transcendence. Referred to as "the light

that precedes creation," it is so bright that it cannot be beheld. The second and third

quoted verses (*Psalm 18:12* and *Psalm 97:2*) effect a transition in the discussion toward a

model of complete immanence. Employing *Psalm 18:12*, the authors of the *Bahir*

describe the light that is *Keter* as manifesting itself into creation of its own volition,

thereby concealing itself within the "darkness" of the material universe. The third quote

(*Psalm 97:2*) backtracks somewhat to transcendence by stating that where *Keter* is

manifested into creation, it remains obscured by the "cloud and gloom" of matter that

surrounds it. In the final portion, the author(s) of the *Bahir* acknowledge the apparently

divisive polarity of the transcendence/immanence models presented, seeking to mitigate

that polarity with *Psalm 139:12*. Here, God's presence is described as occurring

simultaneously within and beyond creation, thus balancing the two perspectives. This

balance produces a unity that joins the transcendent with the immanent and its various

expressions as creator/created, light/dark, spirit/matter, and the divine/mundane. The

unity produced is arrived at through the process of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis,

whereby the transcendence of God is proposed (thesis); then, God's immanence is

proposed (anti-thesis); and then the two are placed within one locus, in which they are

synthesized. This last stage signifies God as both transcendent and immanent at once,

producing unity between the previously contrary positions.

According to Ibn al-Arabi, the creation of the cosmos is an emanative process that

God began for His own self-knowledge. This process is referred to as *theophany* or Self-

Disclosure (*tajallī*) and represents God emanating and seeing Himself within/through creation. In this system, various emanations (*tajalliyyāt*) such as the divine Names emerge from the Essence, enabling the divine Self-Disclosure (the process of emanation is discussed shortly in greater detail). At the same time, the Essence itself is not an emanation or divine Self-Disclosure (Izutsu 23). As a result, knowledge of the Essence remains unattainable, making it the imperceptible and hidden source of creation.

In Ibn al-Arabi's system, the phenomenal form of the universe is represented by the term *zāhir*, which denotes the exoteric and outer form of a thing, i.e., the world at face value. The term *bātin*, relates to the esoteric and inner aspect of the universe, i.e., the secret intention of the divine to be Self-Disclosed through creation. These concepts are related to the idea that the Essence is both present and concealed within creation, in that the outer/*zāhir* form represents the cosmos that conceals the inner/*bātin* form of the Essence within (Izutsu 53). The outer and exoteric nature of the cosmos is made up of the divine Names, which are emanated from the Essence and made manifest into creation for the sake of the divine Self-Disclosure. As a result of being part of the Self-Disclosure, the Names and the entities that are produced from them are discernible through creation. This system maintains the presence of God in both the outer form of the universe through the Names, and the inner form through the Essence. However, whereas the outer, manifest portion is knowable, the inner, containing the Essence, remains a mystery.

Concerning the relationship between the transcendent Essence and the immanent Names, Ibn al-Arabi states the following: "In the activity, creation has become clothed in the Real in giving existence, and the Real has become clothed by creation in the form from which the trace becomes manifest in the witnessed domain…" (Chittick, SD 40).

Here, Ibn al-Arabi says that the Real (a term for the Essence) both "clothes," and is "clothed" by creation. Where the Essence "clothes" creation, it does so as its creative source. Here, the act of "clothing" something with existence means to give it form in the phenomenal world (Chittick SPK 85). Creation is given form through the emanated divine Names, leading to the second portion of the passage where the Essence is "clothed" by creation. Here, the Essence is described as hidden within the forms that are produced through the manifestation of the divine Names, i.e., where Ibn al-Arabi states "the trace becomes manifest in the witnessed domain." The "trace" is the presence of the Essence within "the witnessed domain," which is the phenomenal world. Similarly, the phenomenal world is described by Ibn al-Arabi as both encompassed and concealed by the Essence. He states that "encompassing a thing conceals that thing" (Chittick SPK 93). The Essence encompasses creation by giving it form through the emanated divine Names, and then, it conceals Itself within that which it has given form to through the Names.

The current study has previously described how the *Keter* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Essence are both conceptualized as the transcendent concealed within the immanent. In both systems, the most transcendent aspect of the divine is the point of departure for divine emanation. Yet, due to the position of the transcendent beyond that which emanates from it, it nevertheless is described as unfathomable, which maintains the original sense of its transcendence. Another correspondence is that both systems describe the immanent emerging from the transcendent, only to be concealed again within the immanent. In the case of the *Bahir*, the light of *Keter* is described as initially concealed within the heavens. Then, it descends into form where it is concealed within creation. In Ibn al-Arabi's thought, the Essence clothes creation by giving it form, and

50

then conceals itself within those forms as "traces." A similar purpose is served by this theme in both systems of thought. Initially, the transcendent nature of God is emphasized through being deemed unknowable. Subsequently, the transcendent is described as immanent within creation and therefore available to human discernment. Finally, by virtue of the hidden nature of the transcendent-immanent within the cosmos, it is deemed both transcendent and immanent simultaneously. Thus, the initial transcendence is re-affirmed, and a position of relative immanence is established.

After describing the transcendent and immanent natures of the *Keter* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Essence, the next issue to discuss is the process of emanation that begins with them. In both systems, the transcendent serves as the necessary origin of the immanent. However, both systems also develop a transitional state between the transcendent and immanent that represents not only a shift from transcendence to immanence, but also the shift that occurs in creation—from the One to the many.[35]

In the *Bahir*, the first *Sefirah* to emanate from *Keter* is *Hokmah*. This *Sefirah* symbolizes the divine wisdom/logos that permeates the *Torah*, and by extension, creation. Since the *Torah* is the blueprint for creation, it becomes the medium through which the divine wisdom enters creation. Regarding *Hokmah* as the first emanation, verse 17 of the *Bahir* states: "Why is the letter *Aleph* at the beginning? Because it was before everything, even the *Torah*" (Kaplan 8). Here, *Hokmah* is referred to as the "beginning" and is related to the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *Aleph*.[36] Previously in the current study, *Keter* is described as Nothingness. As a result, *Hokmah* as the "beginning" refers

---

[35] The problem of the One and the Many refers to the mystical and philosophical problem of maintaining the unity and connection between the unique God of monotheism and the multifarious cosmos that He creates.

[36] In later Kabbalist thought, the letter *Aleph* becomes synonymous with *Keter*; however, this is not the case in the *Bahir*.

to the commencement of the Sefirotic structure. Since the manifestation of the *Torah* and creation occurs in the third *Sefirah, Binah, Hokmah*'s position between *Keter* and *Binah* signifies the transitional state between the transcendence and immanence of the divine (Kaplan 92).

The subsequent verse of the *Bahir* (verse 18) describes *Binah* as follows: "Why does Bet follow it? Because it was first. Why does it have a tail? To point to the place from which it came. Some say, from there the world is sustained" (Kaplan 8). The second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *Bet,* alludes to *Binah.*[37] Through this letter symbolism, *Binah* is described as the beginning of manifestation, dependant on its transcendent predecessor for sustenance. This concept is alluded to in the discussion of the "tail" on the letter *Bet* that reaches back towards *Hokmah* (Kaplan 100). By virtue of pointing toward *Hokmah*, *Binah,* as the beginning of manifestation, draws attention to its place of origin in the transcendent. The transcendence of the source of *Binah* is suggested through the use of indefinite language in the last phrase of the verse—i.e., "Some say from there the world is sustained."—indicating that the matter is uncertain and/or mysterious because it occurs prior to manifestation. *Hokmah* is similarly described in relation to its source in verse 15 of the *Bahir.* Here, the *Aleph* (*Hokmah*) is said to be "open from behind" (Kaplan 7), indicating that its source is in *Keter.* In both cases, the transcendent aspect of the divine serves as the hidden source of the immanent. The source is hidden because it feeds the manifest from "behind," maintaining its transcendent nature by remaining unseen. The enduring connection between them maintains the Sefirotic system and, by extension, the world.

---

[37] In Hebrew, the word for creation is *berachah.* Similarly, the *Torah* begins with "In the Beginning," which is *bereshit*. Both signify *Binah*, since both begin with *Bet*. See *Bahir* verse 3 (Kaplan 1-2).

Another example of the actualization of *Hokmah* within *Binah* is found in verse 14 of the *Bahir*:

> Why is the letter *Bet* closed on all sides and open in the front? This teaches us that it is the House (*Bayit*) of the world. God is the place of the world, and the world is not His place. Do not read *Bet* but *Bayit* (house). It is thus written *(Proverbs 24:3)*, "With wisdom the *house* is built, with understanding it is established, [and with knowledge are its chambers filled]" (Kaplan 6).

Here, the interrelationship between *Hokmah* and *Binah* is illustrated through their alternate epithets of Wisdom and Understanding. Accordingly, *Hokmah*/Wisdom requires *Binah*/Understanding to become "established," i.e., manifested. After *Hokmah* is given form in *Binah*, knowledge becomes possible and thus "fills the chambers." That which fills the chambers are the differentiated souls that are sourced from *Hokmah* and contained within *Binah* (Kaplan 120) and/or the letters of the Hebrew alphabet making up the *Torah* and all of creation.[38] In either case, *Binah* is described as the actualization, manifestation, and differentiation of its source, *Hokmah*. In addition, *Binah* is often gendered female in the *Bahir*. She is the mother of all the remaining *Sefirot*, including the *Shekinah*, who is the only other female *Sefirah*. As the *Sefirah* in which the manifestation of the divine occurs, *Binah* is referred to as the "house"[39] of the world. However, the preceding quotation also includes a statement that limits the perception of this divine immanence. Here, God is described as dwelling within the world, yet not completely contained by it (Kaplan 99). As such, a portion of the divine is described as remaining always beyond the cosmos, maintaining the divine transcendence.

---

[38] See verse 143 of the *Bahir*. A discussion of this verse is included in the first chapter of the present study.

[39] In Rabbinic Hebrew, the term *bayit* (house) is often associated with wife/wifehood. Thus, the imagery of the light/souls from *Hokmah* "filling" the house in *Binah* is indeed sexual.

The first emanation that occurs in Ibn al-Arabi's system is referred to by

Toshihiko Izutsu as the Most Holy Emanation (*al-fayd al-aqdas*) and signifies the

revelation of the Essence to Itself. Regarding this, Ibn al-Arabi states: "This is a (direct)

self-manifestation of the Essence (*tajallī dhātiy*) of which invisibility is the reality. And

through this self-manifestation the 'He-ness' is actualized... The Absolute (at this stage)

is eternally and everlastingly 'He' for itself" (Izutsu 43). The first and Most Holy

Emanation remains transcendent through the "invisibility" referred to by Ibn al-Arabi in

the preceding quotation. In this first stage of the emanative Self-Disclosure, the Essence

sees itself from an outside vantage point and gains self-perception. As a result, it begins

to refer to itself in the third person as "He" or "He-ness" (43). Although the first

emanation is indeed a true emanation, Ibn al-Arabi maintains its continuing

transcendence by speaking of its eternal nature.

Due to the outside vantage point that the Essence gains through the Most Holy

Emanation, the Most Holy Emanation is also the point at which the divine Names are

perceived within the Essence (Izutsu 155). The Names represent the beginning of the

divine manifestation; however, the transcendence of the Most Holy Emanation is

maintained, since the manifestation of the Names into creation only occurs in the next

emanative phase. This next emanation, known as the Holy Emanation (*al-fayd al

muqaddas*), is where the Names are made manifest into created things, producing the

phenomenal world.

Based on this theory of emanation, the Most Holy Emanation is the transition

between the transcendence of the Essence and the immanence of the divinely manifested

Names. Transcendence is maintained by the Most Holy Emanation where the

manifestation of creation is deferred to the next emanative stage. Conversely, within the transcendent Essence, immanence is made possible through the perception and emanation of the divine Names. After the Names take form as created things, creation can take part in God's Self-Disclosure, and thus humans may gain knowledge of Him (Corbin 195). Ibn al-Arabi's system describes a procession from the transcendent towards the immanent, allowing for knowledge of God.

Due to the dual function of the divine Names as God's attributes and as the building blocks of creation, they serve as the common ground between God and mankind. For this reason, Ibn al-Arabi states that the Essence can have no relationship with the cosmos save through the intermediaries of the divine Names (Fenton and Glotton XXIV). As discussed previously, the emergence of the Most Holy Emanation represents the initial movement of the transcendent Essence toward manifestation. The emergence of the Names is attributed to the self-delimitation of the Essence, facilitating the Self-Disclosure (Izutsu 152). To better describe this transition, Ibn al-Arabi conceptualizes two types of divine unity, which allow him to explain how the Essence is able to manifest into many Names while still maintaining its essential nature.

The first unity described by Ibn al-Arabi is associated with the Essence and exists prior to the Most Holy Emanation. Referred to as the "Unity of the One" (*ahadiyyat al-ahad)*, the Names exist with this unity in an undifferentiated totality (Chittick SD 168). The second unity, referred to as the "Unity of Manyness" (*ahadiyat al-kathra*) is described as the source of the names and their differentiation (168). This second unity emerges at the stage of the Most Holy Emanation (Izutsu 24). Ibn al-Arabi describes the two unities as follows:

The *ahad* is exalted, forbidden through its unreachability, and it remains forever

in obscurity. There can never be any self-disclosure through it, for its reality

forbids that... the *wāhid* is not made two by any other than itself. Number and

manyness become manifest through its free activity in levels that are intelligible

but not existent (Chittick, SD 168).

The terms in this passage are slightly altered from what has been described previously.

Here, *ahad* refers to the Unity of the One; and *wāhid* refers to the Unity of Manyness.

Initially, the passage describes the transcendent nature of the Unity of the One, and then

describes the Unity of Manyness as the root of manifestation and immanence. The

immanent emerging from the transcendent is a recurring theme in Ibn al-Arabi's thought.

In this case, transcendent Unity leads the way to the Unity of Manyness through which

the world is given form.

A comparison of the point of origin in the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's emanative

systems shows that both begin from a state of ultimate transcendence that leads to the

immanence of the divine in the phenomenal world. In the Sefirotic structure of the *Bahir*,

the position of ultimate transcendence is held by *Keter*, while in Ibn al-Arabi's thought,

the position is described as the Essence. From this position, the ultimate transcendent is

described as (partially) emanated into a transitional state by both systems. In the case of

the *Bahir*, this transition occurs with *Hokmah*; while for Ibn al-Arabi, it occurs with the

Most Holy Emanation. These transitional states represent the pre-cursors to further

manifestation within the third positions of each system. The third state represented by

Binah in the *Bahir*, and the Holy Emanation in Ibn al-Arabi's system, is where

differentiation and manifestation occur, producing the phenomenal world. Although each

of these models describes a movement from the transcendent towards the immanent, both limit the scope and extent of this manifestation.

The *Bahir* limits the immanence of *Keter* by describing the manifestation of its light into creation as a partial manifestation. Verse 160 states:

> We learned that before the world was created, it arose in thought to create an intense light to illuminate it. He created an intense light over which no created thing could have authority. The Blessed Holy One[40] saw, however, that the world could not endure [this light]. He therefore took a seventh of it and left it in its place for them. The rest He put away for the righteous in the Ultimate Future (Kaplan 58).

This passage indicates that a portion of the light prior to the creation of the cosmos was "stored away" in the World to Come because it was too bright for the purpose of this world. Thus, the totality of the light from *Keter* (here designated as "thought") was not completely manifested into the cosmos, thereby maintaining its transcendence. The light represents not only the source of creation but also Divine Wisdom. As a result, where 6/7ths of the light is placed beyond the grasp of mankind in the World to Come, so, presumably, is 6/7ths of the knowledge of God. Mankind's ability to know or understand God is thus limited from the outset of creation, ensuring a degree of divine transcendence within the system. Regarding the light that was utilized in the creation of this world ("filling" the house of *Binah*), it also was considered too bright for creation to behold. For this reason, it is said to be filtered through the remaining *Sefirot* before becoming accessible to mankind (Scholem, *Origins* 136).

---

[40] N.B. In the *Zohar,* the term "Blessed Holy One" refers to the *Sefirah Tiferet*. However, within the *Bahir,* it is associated with the highest level of the divine, the *Sefirot Keter*.

The *Bahir* also appears to employ another method by which the transcendence of *Keter* is maintained, although it may or may not be intentional. This method is the ambiguity surrounding the nature of the light/Divine Wisdom. At times, this light/Divine Wisdom appears to be part of *Keter*, while at other points, it is described as emerging from *Keter*. In the preceding passage, the light is described as being created (presumably from nothing); however, verse 13 of the *Bahir* describes the light as being determined from a greater whole (Kaplan 98). Where that which emanates from *Keter* is described as the Divine Wisdom, the impression is of being personally connected to the transcendent. However, an aspect of transcendence remains in the concept of Divine Wisdom, since it can be understood to be both part of, as well as external to, God.

Ibn al-Arabi also maintains the continuity of the transcendent Essence throughout its manifestation into immanence. In the *Majesty and Beauty* (*kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl*), Ibn al-Arabi produces a list of traits regarding the Essence. Two of these points are: "…it is too great to be confined behind veils and curtains, and so cannot be comprehended by anything but its own light. It is too great: either to exist in the shape of a human being or to lose anything by the existence of particular essences" (Harris 6). The first statement indicates that although the Essence is manifested into creation, it cannot be contained by it. As a result, the emanation of the Essence into the cosmos can only be understood as a partial manifestation. The "veils and curtains" represent the Names and the phenomenal world (Chittick SD 104). Similar to the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir*, the veils are conceived of as

protection from the divine light, without which, all but the divine would be blinded[41] (Izutsu 32).

Ibn al-Arabi also refers to the Essence as the Nonmanifest (Chittick SD 211). This concept is related to the divine Self-Disclosure in that where the Essence is Nonmanifest, it does not qualify for Self-Disclosure and is therefore unknowable (Bashier 114). Conversely, where the Essence is made manifest, it becomes part of the Self-Disclosure. For this reason, Ibn al-Arabi states that "the Manifest is the veil-keeper of the Nonmanifest" (Chittick, SD 207), i.e., that creation conceals the transcendent from human view/knowledge. In the second portion of the preceding quotation, the "particular essences" denote the divine Names. Here, Ibn al-Arabi states that although the Essence is the source of the divine Names, it is not diminished by their emanation/manifestation in any way, which maintains the totality, eternity, and thereby the transcendence of the Essence throughout its manifestation.

Previously, it was noted that the main premise of Ibn al-Arabi's system is that God created the cosmos for the sake of His own Self-Disclosure. At first glance, this may seem to suggest that God is dependent on creation for His self-knowledge. In a limited sense this is the case; however, Ibn al-Arabi continually emphasizes that the ultimate beholder of the Self-Disclosure is not man, but God. In his article "The Vision of God," Michel Chodkiewicz succinctly describes Ibn al-Arabi's position on the nature of the Self-Disclosure: "God is known *because He wants to be known*. He is *only* known because He wants to be known and He alone determines the form and the extent of this

---

[41] Izutsu indicates that this concept is based on the following *Hadith* tradition, which he quotes: "God hides Himself behind seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. If He took away these veils, the fulgurating lights of His Face would at once destroy the sight of any creature who dared to look at it" (33).

knowledge."[42] From this perspective, the transcendence of the Essence is consistent through the divine Self-Disclosure, by virtue of the fact that God determines to what extent He will manifest and be known by creation. Furthermore, the knowledge of God that becomes available is restricted to that which is manifest, i.e., the cosmos. That which is beyond the "form and extent" of the Self-Disclosure maintains its transcendence through its inaccessibility.

The preceding discussion has illustrated how both the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi maintain the transcendence of the divine through conceptualizing its manifestation into creation as partial (although superabundant and continuous). As such, both posit that although the divine can be found within creation, it is by no means contained by it. In the case of the *Bahir*, a metaphor of light is used of which 6/7ths is stored on an alternate plane of existence, within the World to Come. For Ibn al-Arabi, the Essence is similarly described as unchanged, eternal, and inaccessibly existing beyond its manifestations.

Having described the transcendent made immanent and the limits placed by both systems on this process, the next issue to explore is how the immanent serves as the point of departure for knowledge of the transcendent. In both systems, this knowledge is attained through immanence because the immanent draws attention to its source within the transcendent. However, to maintain a degree of the original transcendence, the knowledge acquired through the immanent is necessarily limited. Nonetheless, the immanent remains as the only means of attaining the knowledge of the transcendent.

---

[42] No page number is available for this quote, since this article was published to the Internet by the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society.

A passage near the beginning of the *Bahir* (4th verse) describes how knowledge of God is acquired through the immanent. It begins with a question regarding the relationship between God and creation:

> How do we know that the word *Berachah* [usually translated as *blessing*] comes from the word *Baruch* [meaning *blessed*]? Perhaps it comes from the word *Berech* [meaning *knee*]. It is written (*Isaiah 44:23*), "For to Me shall every knee bend." [*Berachah* can therefore mean] the Place to which every knee bends. What example does this resemble? People want to see the king, but do not know where to find his house (*Bayit*). First they ask "Where is the king's house?" Only then can they ask, "Where is the king?" (Kaplan 2)

According to the *Bahir*, the act of creation and the act of blessing are closely linked. The initial query asks about God's level of involvement in the act of creation, i.e., was it simply the act of blessing an external object. If so, God remains outside of creation, i.e. transcendent. However, where the term *berachah* is taken to mean *knee*, the answer indicates that God was directly involved and/or invested in creation. As such, where God blesses and creates, He also "bends" towards creation, bringing Himself near and descending into it, thereby making Himself immanent (Kaplan 91).

The second portion of the statement, describing the search for the king, relates directly to the response given to the initial question. It determines that the surest method of finding the king is by locating his "house," i.e., the place of his immanence where his "knee bends." The "house" may refer to *Binah*, as in verse 14 discussed previously, or according to Wolfson, it can refer to the *Shekinah* (*Speculum* 350). In either case, the

"Place" indicates the locus of God's manifestation and both *Sefirot*[43] are equally associated with this concept. Here, as in verse 49 already discussed, acquiring knowledge of the divine begins only at the point of divine manifestation. Furthermore, the last line of the preceding passage—"Only then can they ask, 'Where is the king?'"—indicates that without initial knowledge of God's immanence, one cannot gain knowledge of Him in His more transcendent states.

The *Shekinah* is the last and most immanent of the *Sefirot.* From her position within the cosmos, she channels the preceding *Sefirot* into the world and represents the presence of God on earth (Wolfson, *Speculum* 348). In the following excerpt from the *Bahir*, the *Shekinah* is described as present within the mundane world, yet originating within the transcendent. Verse 132 reads:

> What is the meaning of "From His place"? This indicates that none know his place. This is like a royal princess who came from a far place. People did not know her origin, but they saw she was a woman of valor, beautiful and refined in all her ways. They said, "She certainly originates from the side of the light, for she illuminates the world through her deeds." They asked her, "From where are you?" She replied, "From my place." They said, "If so, the people of your place are great. May you be blessed, and may your place be blessed" (Kaplan 48).

The passage begins with a vague description of the transcendent in a location that is unknowable, and then describes a "royal princess" whose presence and special nature is known to the people of the world. The princess symbolizes the *Shekinah,* and her being known by the people indicates her position of proximity and immanence in relation to the

---

[43] Both *Binah* and the *Shekinah* represent the feminine in the *Bahir*. In line with the female biological function, both contain the divine and give it form from within, hence their association with the locus of manifestation.

world (Kiener, Dan, and Idel 64). By virtue of her conduct, the people suspect that she is

of special lineage and seek to know her origin, which indicates that where the immanence

of the divine is beheld in the *Shekinah*, attention is drawn to its origin—the transcendent.

The princess's cryptic response to the people "From my place." indicates that her origin

is indeed the transcendent and unknowable "place" mentioned at the opening of the verse

(Stern 223). Referring to similar analogies within the *Bahir*,[44] a realization arises that the

father of the princess is the king, *Keter.* Through the *Shekinah* and the 32 paths concealed

within her, mankind is able to ascend to the king's "innermost chamber," i.e., *Keter.*[45]

However, in the preceding passage, the king is not mentioned, perhaps so to further

increase the mystery of the *Shekinah*'s origin. Although her origin remains a mystery, the

people of the world are grateful for her "illuminating" powers, praising her and her

transcendent, unknown origin. In fact, only through her presence as the immanent is the

world able to have any knowledge or relationship with the transcendent (Wolfson,

"Hebraic" 169).

Within Ibn al-Arabi's system as well, the immanent is said to draw attention to its

source in the transcendent. This study's previous treatment of his system noted that the

role of the Names is to be intermediaries between God and creation. Although Ibn al-

Arabi describes the Names as veiling and concealing God, he also says that their presence

suggests their source within the Essence: "God established the secondary causes and

made them like veils. Hence, the secondary causes take everyone who knows that they

are veils back to Him" (Chittick, SPK 45). Here the "secondary causes" refer to the

---

[44] See verse 63, which is treated in the first chapter of the present work.
[45] As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Shekinah* signifies the collective souls of *Kineset Yisrael*, and thus her "place" of origin may also refer to *Hokmah*, the source of human souls. Whether the "place" refers to *Keter* or *Hokmah*, the transcendence of the *Shekinah*'s origin remains beyond the stage of manifestation that occurs in *Binah*.

divine Names, and it is by realizing the presence of the Essence beyond these Names, that

mankind is able to attain knowledge of God. Recognition of the Essence beyond the

Names is due to their intermediary position. As intermediaries, the Names are positioned

between the Essence, of which they are a manifestation, and mankind, which manifests

them into the world (Chittick, SPK 62). The nature of this emanation system is

successive, from the Essence to the Names and then to mankind. However, knowledge of

the Essence occurs in a reverse fashion. Ibn al-Arabi states that knowledge of man begins

from a position of particularity, leading toward knowledge of the

universal/transcendent.[46] Here, knowledge of the transcendent occurs through a position

of immanence.

    According to Ibn al-Arabi, the transcendence of God is brought closer to mankind

because it is the source of the immanent. In his treatise on the *Majesty and Beauty*, he

says: "Praise be to Allah the Great; His Majesty is part of the manifestation of His

Beauty" (Harris 5). The Majesty of God represents His total transcendence as the

Essence, and denotes its distance from creation. Ibn al-Arabi's term for God's

distance/transcendence is *tanzīh*. His Beauty, referring primarily to God's nearness to

creation (*tashbīh)*, is linked to the attributes responsible for creation—benevolence and

mercy. These attributes represent God's motivation to create and are directly linked to the

actual process of creation. As a result, the statement that says "His Majesty" is part of

"His Beauty" can be read as: "His distance/transcendence is included in His

proximity/immanence" because, according to Ibn al-Arabi, the realization that God is

immanent induces the realization that God is transcendent.

---

[46] Fenton and Glotton state:"La connaissance que l'Homme a de Dieu procède du particulier à
l'Universel" (XLIII). Trans.: "Man's knowledge of God proceeds from the particular to the Universal."

Where mankind feels God's presence within the world, he/she realizes that much more exists beyond the immanent that remains unknowable. Ibn al-Arabi describes this process as follows: "When Beauty manifests to us here—and Beauty is the welcoming openness of the Truth towards us while Majesty is its unattainable exaltation over us—then His expansiveness in His Beauty is countered by our state of awe" (Harris 7). In this passage, the Beauty of God or His immanence is made available to mankind; however, it reminds mankind that the transcendence of God is still unattainable. Hence, the transcendent leads to the immanent through emanation; yet the emanated, in realizing its true nature, returns to experiencing God as transcendent. This back and forth process leads to a state of mind referred to by Ibn al-Arabi as "Bewilderment" (*hayrah*). It is described as especially bewildering because God as transcendent and God as immanent are considered equally true statements of reality (Chittick, SD 205).

In addition, for Ibn al-Arabi, a recognition that our knowledge of the Essence remains impossible through our position of immanence is in and of itself a form of knowledge. To this effect, he quotes one of the companions of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, who (allegedly) said: "The inability to attain perception is itself perception" (Harris 13). Thus, although we are unable to know exactly how the transcendent is present within the immanent, we nonetheless are able to sense its presence beyond the manifest (Izutsu 63). This type of knowledge is derived from a position of immanence, leading to a realization of the transcendent, however vague it may be.

By comparing these descriptions of the transcendent perceived through the immanent, a conclusion can be drawn that limited knowledge of the transcendent is made possible from the position of the immanence of creation within both systems. Thus, both

systems appear to have in common the Neoplatonic conception of the transcendent One from which divine emanations emerge. In the case of the *Bahir,* the transcendent is described as "bending" and manifesting itself into creation. From a position of immanence, creation is able to locate God's residence within the world (the "king's house") and by realizing its own immanent nature, find God Himself (the transcendent king). Ibn al-Arabi's corresponding description relates God's presence in the world through His Names, which suggest the transcendent nature of the One that they name and make manifest (Chittick, SPK 36). In addition, knowledge of the transcendent hidden within the immanent is considered special in both systems. Within the *Bahir,* only those who recognize God as immanent within creation are able to proceed to the following step of locating Him. Similarly, Ibn al-Arabi claims that it is only a select few that can perceive the veils that conceal and point to God and His true nature beyond them.

This chapter concludes on the transcendent aspect of the divine within the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's systems. In both systems, the transcendent serves as the point of origin and source of the immanent and leads to the idea that the transcendent can be discerned through the immanent. However, knowledge of the transcendent gained through the immanent is limited by its being inaccessibly hidden within creation or only a partial manifestation of an unlimited potential. These limitations maintain the relative transcendence of the divine in both systems. The hidden and limited manifestation of the transcendent within the immanent leads both systems to conclude that the only knowledge of the transcendent available to mankind is through the immanent. In other words, God as above and beyond creation can only be perceived through creation itself. This knowledge, available only to the select and mystical few, connects the seemingly

disparate entities of God as transcendent and creation as immanent, creating an overall

unity between the two aspects of the divine.

Chapter Three: The Necessary Intermediaries

The previous chapters focused on the transcendent and immanent aspects of the divine in the systems of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi. Specifically, the first chapter outlined the concept of the divine as immanent within creation, and the second chapter described the paradox of the transcendent as the unreachable, yet ever present source of creation. Between these poles of transcendence and immanence, each system posits a set of intermediaries: for the *Bahir*, they are the *Sefirot*, and for Ibn al-Arabi, they are the divine Names. The intermediaries of both systems share a number of characteristics; for example, in each system, they are emanated from the divine and represent the transition from the transcendent to the immanent. After the intermediaries are externalized, they are perceived as attributes of the divine. From this position, the *Sefirot*/Names are further emanated into creation where they become the attributes of humankind as well. With the creation of man, the *Sefirot*/Names reach their final functions as representations of the various relationships between humankind and the divine. In other words, the *Sefirot*/Names are the vehicles through which man can attain (limited) knowledge of the divine.

With respect to the intermediaries of both systems, the second chapter discussed their emanative nature, and the first chapter explored man's microcosmic role as the embodiment of the divine attributes. The current chapter focuses on the ways in which the intermediaries link the transcendent divine with creation, which is achieved through the intermediary function of the *Sefirot*/Names in the creative act(s); the *Sefirot*/Names as representations of the relationships between man and God; and the personification and

embodiment of the *Sefirot*/Names in the exemplary human figures of the patriarchs and prophets. Finally, the current chapter discusses how each system maintains the unity of the divine in the face of multiple intermediaries. In each of these points of comparison, the intermediaries fill the space between the transcendence and immanence of the divine.

One of the ways that the *Bahir* describes the *Sefirot* as intermediaries between God and creation is to link them exegetically to the 10 creative statements made in *Genesis*. For example, the first of these statements is "Let there be light." (*Gen 1:3*), which according to the *Bahir* refers to the emanation of *Hokmah* from *Keter* (Green, *Medieval* 100). The 10 statements are said to have been spoken through the "*Torah* of Truth," a synonym for the sixth *Sefirah*, *Tiferet*.[47] Regarding the 10 creative statements spoken by the Torah of Truth, verse 138 of the *Bahir* reads: "And what is the *Torah of Truth?* This is that power which represents the truth of the worlds, and He operates by Thought. And He gives existence to ten Utterances by which the world exists, and He is one of them" (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 69). This passage posits that *Tiferet* gives the creative commands that call creation into being. By placing creation at the sixth level of emanation, the *Bahir* seems to go against the description of the transcendent-creator God of *Genesis*. However, the presence and authority of the highest and most transcendent *Sefirah, Keter,* is alluded to in this verse where it states that the *Torah* of Truth "operates by Thought" ("thought" being a synonym for *Keter*) (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 69). Thus, where the *Bahir* describes *Tiferet* as acting on the authority of *Keter*, *Keter* becomes present within the creative process. However, since *Tiferet* completes the act, the involvement of *Keter* occurs only from a distance, maintaining its position of transcendence. It also should be noted that even though *Tiferet* has the special function of

---

[47] For a list of the 10 statements and their associated *Sefirot*, see Kaplan p. 169.

making utterances on behalf of the other nine *Sefirot*, it is not considered to be above them and remains an equal component of the overall structure.

In addition to being associated with the 10 creative utterances, the structure of the *Sefirot* symbolizes the Ten Commandments (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 59). Although the Sefirotic model in the *Bahir* is made up of 10 *Sefirot*, the last 6 or 7 are sometimes grouped together. This conceptual dynamism allowed the authors of the *Bahir* to widen the application of *Sefirotic* symbolism. For example, where the structure is comprised of six *Sefirot*, it symbolizes the six cardinal directions through which the manifestation of the cosmos was established (Ripsman-Eylon 93). In the structure of six, the three highest and most transcendent of the *Sefirot* are excluded (*Keter, Hokmah,* and *Binah*), as well as the last *Sefirah*, the *Shekinah*. The *Shekinah* is excluded because it exists beyond the structure and within the world.[48] Where the structure is comprised of seven *Sefirot*, the first three—*Keter, Hokmah,* and *Binah*—are again excluded, and the *Shekinah* remains. The *Sefirotic* structure of seven signifies the seven days of the week and the seven voices of the theophany at Sinai (Scholem, *Origins* 138).

The *Bahir* links the voices at Sinai with the *Sefirot* in verse 45, employing *Psalm* 29:3-9 in which various forms of God's voice are described. These voices are attributed to the voices heard/seen at Sinai, as well as to the *Sefirot*. For the sake of brevity, just one example provided by the *Bahir* follows: "The voice of God comes in Strength" (*Psalm* 29:4). This voice refers to the fifth *Sefirah Din/Gevurah,* which within the system of the *Bahir* represents judgement and by extension, authority, strength, and punishment (Kaplan 117).

---

[48] When the *Shekinah* is cut off from the rest of the structure, it is said to be in exile in the world (see the *Bahir,* verse 133). However, the *Shekinah* also may be included in the structure of six when it is united with *Yesod*, the seventh *Sefirah*. This union denotes the syzygy of female and male.

After listing the various forms of God's voice, the verse concludes: "This teaches us that the *Torah* was given with seven voices. In each of them the Master of the universe revealed Himself to them, and they saw Him. It is thus written, 'And all the people saw the voices'" (*Exodus 20:15*) (Kaplan 16). In the previous discussion, the seven voices "seen" at Sinai are described as having produced the *Torah*. The function of the voices within this passage is threefold: first, they bind God and mankind through the laws of the *Torah*; second, through their presence, they allow mankind to interact with the divine; and third, by nature of being the voices of the divine, they are said to reveal God. In each instance, the voices are intermediaries placed between mankind and the divine. Kaplan notes that the voices symbolize "externalizations" of the divine, stemming from the three highest *Sefirot,* which are described as "mentalities" (118). These seven externalizations are perceived as attributes of the divine and equated with the seven lowest *Sefirot*. In this respect, they represent the facets through which the divine is revealed to mankind; however, some of the transcendence of the divine also is maintained in that the voices/*Sefirot* reveal only aspects of the Master, and not the Master Himself (Kaplan 117). Thus, the last seven *Sefirot* in the system of the *Bahir* both reveal and conceal the divine. Even though the divine is revealed through them by virtue of their being its attributes, it also is concealed by them in that the *Sefirot* only partially reveal the divine. This dual nature of the *Sefirot* is indicative of their intermediary nature and function.

Ibn al-Arabi uses the image of a Cloud to describe the emergence and intermediary nature of the divine Names. The previous chapter discussed the Most Holy Emanation—the revelation of the Essence to Itself—and the Holy Emanation, the manifestation of the divine Names into created beings/things. Ibn al-Arabi's use of the

Cloud metaphor represents the intermediary position between these transcendent and immanent emanations (Chittick, SPK 135). The Cloud in Ibn al-Arabi's system also represents the Breath of the All-Merciful, which is the symbolic Breath through which God "speaks" and gives existence to all of creation (Corbin 185). With respect to the Cloud, Ibn al-Arabi states: "He thereby let us know that the Cloud – in respect of the fact that it is an All Merciful Breath receptive to the forms of the letters of the words of the cosmos, carries the names, all of them" (Chittick, SD 70). This short statement describes how the Breath contains the Names that make up the cosmos, but it also is that which is "receptive" to creation within the divine. As a result, the Essence or the most transcendent aspect of the divine is not directly involved with the creative process; nor is it involved with created things. Thus, the Breath/Cloud functions as the intermediary between the Essence and creation. According to Ibn al-Arabi, the number of Names and attributes of the divine are as vast in number as the divine itself. For this reason, he states that the number of Names is infinite, while the 99 most cited Names of the Islamic tradition represent the "Mothers of the Names" (Chittick, SPK 42).[49]

Due to its intermediary position, the Cloud represents the beginning of manifestation and is the highest stage at which anything other than the transcendent Essence exists; as such, it symbolizes the highest knowledge man can acquire of the divine (Chittick, SPK 134): "The Cloud is the first thing [in the ontological hierarchy]

---

[49] In his *Inshā al-dawā'ir* (The Production of Circles), Ibn al-Arabi outlines seven names that function as "leaders" (*imāms*), which are the following: Knower, Purposer, Powerful, Speaker, Generous, Just, and the Living (Elmore 10). The use of the seven names does seem to coincide with the grouping of the seven attributes in the *Bahir,* and Elmore notes that Ibn al-Arabi may have been influenced by early Kabbalist thought. However, the current study has not linked these seven names to the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir* because a direct resemblance beyond their number does not appear to be evident.

concerning which the question 'Where?'[50] can be posed. From it become manifest loci

which receive corporeal meanings in a sensory and imaginal form" (Chittick, SPK 134).

At the stage of the Cloud, the divine Names are undifferentiated and hold the potential of

all creatable things, making further manifestation possible (Chittick, SPK 131).

According to Ibn al-Arabi, after the divine Names came into being (became self-aware)

from the Essence, they began to "crave" subjects that would give meaning to the

attributes that they represented (Elmore 26). Thus, the "craving" of the Names led to the

creation of the cosmos. Here, Ibn al-Arabi emphasizes that it was the Names and not the

Essence that required subjects (Chittick, SPK 86), and so he maintains the transcendence

and independence of the Essence from the Names and creation. The intermediary

function of the Cloud/Names is that it is the space in which the first outward emanation

occurs, as well as being the first level at which "manifest loci" (i.e., creation) receive

"corporeal meaning." Thus, without the Cloud/Names, creation could never have

occurred, making the Cloud/Names the necessary requirement of creation:

> The necessity of the Cloud/Names is explained by Ibn al-Arabi as follows:
>
> Through and in the Cloud the cosmos becomes manifest, for the cosmos cannot
>
> possibly become manifest as a property of the Nonmanifest. Hence the Real must
>
> possess a manifestation through which the forms of the cosmos may become
>
> manifest, and this is none other than the Cloud, which is the name the Manifest,
>
> the All-Merciful (Chittick, SPK 132).

---

[50] William Chittick notes that Ibn al-Arabi's basis for this statement is a *Hadith* that describes the Prophet being asked where God was before He "created the creatures." The answer is: "He came to be in a cloud, neither above which nor below which was any air" (SPK 125). Chittick notes that this *Hadith* appears in the collections of Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Hanbal (SPK 397).

In this way, Ibn al-Arabi explains that the cosmos cannot come into being directly from the Essence (the "Nonmanifest" here refers to the Essence) because the Essence is completely transcendent and independent from creation. As a result, the Real (another term for the Essence) is said to require an intermediary stage of emanation that allows "the forms of the cosmos" to become manifest and/or created. Again, this intermediary stage is the Cloud, which contains the Names that make up the building blocks of creation. The Cloud again is equated with the Breath of the All-Merciful, and its central role is alluded to through the mention of the names "the Manifest" and "the All-Merciful."

In both the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's systems, the intermediaries represent the transition between the transcendent divine and creation. Emerging from the transcendent, the intermediaries maintain contact with it, while being responsible for the creative acts that bring the cosmos into being. For example, while operating through the transcendent *Keter*, *Tiferet* is responsible for calling creation into being. Similarly, for Ibn al-Arabi, the Essence must possess an intermediary locus through which manifestation can occur. This locus is the Cloud, and from it the Names are said to begin to "crave' subjects, bringing creation into being. In each case, the highest level of the divine remains partially isolated from the creative process, maintaining its transcendence. Yet, at the same time, a relationship between the divine and the created is made possible through the presence and creative function of the intermediaries. Thus, the intermediaries of both systems maintain the transcendence and immanence of the divine simultaneously.

In both systems of thought, the creative function of the intermediaries is closely tied to their nature as divine attributes. The seven voices at Sinai described by the *Bahir*

and Ibn al-Arabi's Breath both describe the externalization of the transcendent divine into an intermediary state. As externalizations of the divine, the intermediaries come to represent its attributes. For both systems, once the attributes are emanated, they are able to interact with creation. The first instance of their interaction is carried out by their bringing creation into being, and the second instance occurs through their continuing presence and representation of the divine as its attributes. This function is described in the *Bahir* where the seven voices or seven lowest *Sefirot* are said to reveal the "Master" to the people. This function is equally present in Ibn al-Arabi's system in that the created things interact with the divine only through the Names. As externalizations of the transcendent divine, the voices/Names allow humankind to gain knowledge of the divine, while maintaining an aspect of its transcendence.

According to the *Bahir*, the seven lowest *Sefirot* are born of the relationships between the *Sefirot* that precede them (Kaplan 105). The first of these relationships is between *Hokmah* and *Binah,* the second and third of the *Sefirot.* It should be noted that *Keter*, the highest *Sefirah,* is not involved in this first relationship, and thus its transcendence is maintained within the overall structure. The following passage from verse 186 of the *Bahir* describes the process by which the *Sefirot* are produced:

> [First comes] Wisdom, and then comes Understanding. And in Understanding is 'counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear of God.' But you told us that 'counsel' is deeds of Kindness, and that Understanding is the Attribute of Justice. [One is above the other.] Knowledge is Truth. Knowledge is that with which one recognizes the truth. 'The fear of God' is the Treasury of the *Torah* (Kaplan 73).

The passage begins by stating that the first emanation is *Hokmah* (Wisdom) followed by *Binah* (Understanding). Previously, it has been noted that *Binah* symbolizes the beginning of manifestation. As a result, the *Sefirot* that follow *Binah* are seen as emerging from her.[51] In this passage, the *Sefirot* that follow *Binah* are described as counsel (*Hesed*), strength (*Din*), knowledge (*Tiferet*), and the fear of God (*Yesod/Shekinah*). In addition, characteristics usually associated with these *Sefirot* are Mercy (*Hesed*), Judgement/Strength (*Din*), *Torah* of Truth/peace (*Tiferet*), Foundation (*Yesod*), and the *Shekinah*.[52]

The interlocutors of this passage request clarification about that which emerges from *Binah/*Understanding, since this verse indicates that both *Hesed* (Counsel/Kindness) and *Din* (Strength/Justice) emerge from *Binah*/Understanding, whereas verse 11 of the *Bahir* indicates that *Hesed* emerges from *Hokmah,* and *Din* from *Binah*.[53] The authors answer that *Hesed* precedes *Din* where one is said to be placed "above the other." They also state that "Knowledge is Truth," signifying *Tiferet*. Here *Tiferet*/Truth is associated with "knowledge" because it represents the synthesis of the two opposing forces that precede it in the Sefirotic structure—*Hesed* (Mercy) and *Din* (Justice) (Scholem, *Origins* 144). For this reason, *Tiferet* is associated with peace[54] (144). The description of the emanation of the various *Sefirot* shows how they are born of the relationships that occur between them.

---

[51] See verse 131 that describes the relationship of *Binah* as mother to the remaining *Sefirot* (Dan, "Midrash" 136)

[52] The *Sefirot Nezah* and *Hod* are not accounted for here, and the *Bahir* says very little of them generally. They are associated with prophecy in later Kabbalist thought (Kaplan 128).

[53] N.B. The attribute of *Din* is not specifically associated with evil in the *Bahir* (Scholem, *Origins* 148). This association occurs later in the Kabbalist tradition where the female *Sefirot*, *Binah* and the *Shekinah* are considered particularly vulnerable to it.

[54] In later Kabbalist thought, *Tiferet* is named Prince of Peace and is associated with the attribute of compassion.

The preceding passage also describes how the relationship between man and the divine occurs through the last *Sefirah*, the *Shekinah*. Described as the "Treasury of the *Torah*" from which the "fear of God" emerges (Kaplan n.219), the *Shekinah* is the precursor to man's study of the *Torah*. Further on in the same verse 186 quoted previously, the *Bahir* states: "A person must first be god-fearing, and then he can study the *Torah*" (Kaplan 73). Thus, through the attribute that the *Shekinah* represents, "the fear of God," mankind is led to the study of the *Torah* and therefore is brought closer to God. Here the *Shekinah* serves as the intermediary and intercessor between God's transcendence (indicated by "fear") and His nearness or immanence through the *Oral Torah*, which she simultaneously represents.

Concerning the various forms of the *Torah* in the *Bahir*, it has been previously noted that the Primordial *Torah* is associated with the third *Sefirah, Binah*. Within the system of the *Bahir*, the primordial *Torah* of *Binah* is actualized or takes form in the sixth emanative stage of *Tiferet*, and then once again, in the last *Sefirah*—the *Shekinah* (Scholem, *Origins* 145). The relationship between these three *Sefirot* signifies the manifestation and further specification of the *Torah* from its highest position within the transcendent into its most immanent position within creation. Here again, *Tiferet* or the *Torah* of Truth serves as the intermediary between *Binah*—the transcendent, primordial *Torah*—and the *Shekinah*, the Oral and "Treasury of the *Torah*" immanent within creation.

The following statement describes Ibn al-Arabi's position on the relationship between the transcendent Essence and the intermediary Names:

God's *tanzīh* is that He shares nothing in *wujūd*… That which He calls the "cosmos" is the name Manifest, and it is His Face. That of Him which is non-manifest in relation to His Manifest is the name Nonmanifest, and that is His He-ness. So He becomes manifest to the cosmos, and He remains absent from it (Chittick, SD 206).

The *tanzīh* of the divine refers to its dissimilarity to mankind. In Ibn al-Arabi's system, the divine attributes are divided into two groups: the first are the attributes that are shared with mankind and the second are those that belong to God alone. The former are attributes of similarity or *tashbīh*, whereas the latter are attributes of dissimilarity or *tanzīh* (Chittick, SPK 23). For example, the Name "the Independent" belongs to the divine alone and man does not share in its reality. Where God is characterized as *tanzīh* or dissimilar to mankind, He is experienced as transcendent. Thus, to paraphrase the preceding excerpt, part of God's transcendence lies in the fact that "He shares nothing in *wujūd*," which refers to being or existence. Hence, the statement indicates that the transcendent Essence does not share His existence with anything in creation.

The cosmos according to Ibn al-Arabi is represented by the Name 'The Manifest," which in the previous discussion referred to the Cloud, and that which is made manifest is the Names and their subjects. However, the divine is not made manifest in its entirety, since a portion always remains Nonmanifest and reserved in transcendence. In the preceding quotation, Ibn al-Arabi equates the Manifest with "His Face," indicating the theophanic nature of creation as the manifestation of the divine attributes (Nettler 72). This equation also implies that creation is the primary means by which man can interact with God because human communication primarily is accomplished through the "face."

Last, because a portion of the divine always remains Nonmanifest, Ibn al-Arabi states

that the divine Essence (referred to here as "He-ness") is both involved/immanent, as well

as absent/transcendent.

Also, Ibn al-Arabi's thought about the nature of the Names as entities relates to

the relationship of ultimate transcendence of the Nonmanifest and the immanence of the

Manifest. Since the Names require subjects, they are considered "relational" and

therefore have no independent existence of their own (Chittick, SD 39). As a result, the

Names and all that derive from them (i.e., creation) have no true existence. Essence alone

is that which truly exists, and this thought process represents one of the ways that Ibn al-

Arabi maintains the unity of the divine in the face of the multiplicity of the cosmos (a

topic discussed in more detail shortly).

In Ibn al Arabi's system, one of the divine Names stands above the rest. This

Name is the All-Merciful and it takes precedence over the others due to its special role in

the creative process (Izutsu 116). The All-Merciful is another term for the Cloud, the

means through which all things are given existence. Thus, the divine Names rely on the

All-Merciful to give existence to the subjects that give them meaning (creation). In other

words, the All-Merciful gives reality to all other divine Names by allowing their

manifested subjects to come into being (Izutsu 120). The divine Names (including the

All-Merciful) that emerge from the Cloud also represent the relationships between

creation and the divine (Chittick, SD 5). These relationships occur between mankind and

the Names, allowing the Essence to continue in a state of total transcendence. Since the

relationship between the divine and creation also is in a constant state of flux, the Names

exemplify the dynamic nature of creation, allowing the Essence to remain unchanging (Chittick, SPK 138).

In his *Fusūs al-Hikam*, Ibn al-Arabi provides an example of the Names in relationships amongst themselves, as well as between mankind and the divine: "When God bestows this name [the mighty] on one of His servants, He Himself is called the Strengthener (*al-muʿizz*), while the recipient is called the mighty [*al-ʿazīz*]. Thus God, as Protector, guards against the wishes of God the Avenger, the Chastiser" (Austin 185). The context of this passage refers to the concept of human servitude toward the divine and the protection that this position of vulnerability necessitates from the divine. In Ibn al-Arabi's system, the concept of reciprocity between the divine and humankind is a recurring theme. In this example, 2 of the 99 divine Names are mentioned—the Mighty (*al-ʿAzīz*) and the Strengthener (*al-Muʿizz*). However, the former is ascribed to humankind and the latter to the divine. By ascribing one of the divine Names to mankind, Ibn al-Arabi indicates the active and intermediary nature of the Names within creation. He also describes the way in which the Names serve as relationships between mankind and the divine: God's role as the "Strengthener" is said to make His servants "mighty." In addition to describing the relationship between mankind and the divine, the Names also describe man's experience of the divine. In the preceding quotation, this experience occurs when man's being made mighty allows him to avoid the experience of the divine as the Avenger or the Chastiser. Thus, Ibn al-Arabi describes the dynamic nature of the Names and their interactions: "Pains and pleasures derive from the contrariety and the compatibility of the names" (Chittick, SD 206). In the preceding example, the Names the

Mighty and the Strengthener, work together to produce harmony, whereas the Protector and the Avenger produce contention.

In both the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's system, the role of the attributes is described through the concept of relationships. The first relationship in both systems occurs subsequent to the establishment of the total transcendence of the divine. In the *Bahir*, the relationships that produce the *Sefirot* begin from the second and third positions in the structure, allowing the transcendence of *Keter* to be maintained. Similarly, Ibn al-Arabi's Essence or the Nonmanifest remains ever independent and beyond the attributes that emanate from it. Relationships also occur between the attributes themselves, beginning with the highest level of manifestation. In the *Bahir*, the *Sefirot* are born of the relationships that occur amongst themselves beginning with *Binah*, whereas in Ibn al-Arabi's system, all of the attributes require the presence of the All-Merciful/Cloud to be made manifest. Finally, in both systems, the attributes signify the relationships between mankind and the divine. For example, in the *Bahir*, the *Shekinah* as the "fear of God" encourages mankind to study the *Torah* and thereby become closer to the divine. Similarly, in Ibn al-Arabi's thought, God's making His servant mighty (one type of relationship) protects him from the more wrathful attribute of God as the Avenger (another type of relationship).

Having discussed the divine attributes and how they relate to the concept of relationship in both systems, the current study now looks to how they are embodied by the patriarchs and prophets of each system. The first chapter of the present work examined how humans and the divine share the same attributes to the extent that the human being represents the microcosmic version of the divine. In addition to this idea,

both systems regard the patriarchs/prophets as more complete embodiments of the divine attributes.[55] This special qualification is due to their intimacy and personal contact with the divine.

Within the *Bahir*, the seven lowest *Sefirot* are those associated with the patriarchs of Judaism (Scholem, *Origins* 138). The seven figures and their associated *Sefirot* are Abraham (*Hesed*), Isaac (*Din*), Jacob (*Tiferet*), Moses (*Nezah*), Aaron (*Hod*), Joseph (*Yesod*), and David (*Shekinah*) (Kaplan 173). Of these seven, the present study focuses on the first three—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through their examples in the *Bahir*, the embodiment of the divine and the relationship between mankind and the transcendence and immanence of God are developed.

Abraham in the *Bahir* represents *Hesed*, which is the attribute of mercy or kindness. The embodiment of *Hesed* in the figure of Abraham is described in verse 191[56] of the *Bahir*: "Thus spoke the quality of Love, *hesed*: 'As long as Abraham was in the world, I did not have to do my work, for Abraham stood there, in my place, and guarded my post (fulfilled my task). For that is my work: to intercede for the world'" (Scholem, *Origin*, 146). In this passage, the "quality of Love" is the personification of the *Sefirah Hesed* who states that because Abraham so fully embodied its nature, it required no further presence within the world (Green, "Zaddik" 343). Here the attribute of *Hesed* is doubly personified, once through its speech and then through its presence within Abraham. One of the characteristics of *Hesed* embodied in Abraham is that of

---

[55] N.B. For Ibn al-Arabi, the most complete manifestation of the divine Names is the Perfect Man. In his system, mystics tend to rank higher than prophets in manifesting the divine names (with the exception of Mohammed). For the purpose of the present discussion, the current study focuses only on the prophets as embodiments of the attributes of the divine Names.

[56] N.B. Scholem indicates that this is verse 132 based on his own numbering system. However, Dan, Kiener, and Idel; and Kaplan follow the numbering determined by R. Margaliot, and the current study uses this numbering system.

intercession. In later Kabbalist thought, intercession becomes a key component in the concept of the *tzaddik*, whose presence in the world ensures the continuity of divine blessings (Scholem, *Origins* 146). As discussed previously, the *Sefirah Hesed*-Mercy exists in opposition to that of *Din*-Judgement, and thus intercedes on behalf of mankind.[57]

The association of Abraham with kindness is based on the Biblical description of his hospitality in *Genesis* 18: 1-15 in which he offers food and drink to strangers (see verse 135, Kaplan 50). His role as a compassionate intercessor likely also stems from *Genesis* 18, verses 16-33 in which he is described as negotiating with God to save Sodom from destruction. Here, God's attribute of *Din* or Judgement makes the decision to destroy Sodom, while His attribute of *Hesed*, exemplified in Abraham, opposes the decision. Based on Abraham's behaviour and the testimony of *Hesed*, it is clear that for the *Bahir*, Abraham's embodiment of the attribute of *Hesed* is complete.

In the Bible, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob share the filial relationship of grandfather, father, and grandson. The relationships between these patriarchs mirror the relationships between the *Sefirot* that they represent (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 67). Verse 135 of the *Bahir* states:

> Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were given powers, one to each of them, and it was given to each of them according to the character of his ways… if Abraham had not performed acts of Lovingkindness and not merited the measure of Lovingkindness, Jacob would not have merited the measure of Truth, for it is because Abraham was worthy of the measure of Lovingkindness that Isaac

---

[57] In later Kabbalist thought, the attribute that is described as interceding in compassion is *Tiferet/*Jacob. In the *Bahir,* this characteristic is attributed to *Hesed/*Abraham (Scholem, *Origins* 144).

merited the measure of Fear… and what is [Isaac's fear]? That fear is *tohu*…

(Dan, Kiener, and Idel 66).

The preceding discussion noted that *Hesed*, *Din*, and *Tiferet* shared a relationship within the Sefirotic structure. Representing thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis, these three *Sefirot* signify two opposing forces and their reconciliation in a third state. In this passage, the relationship is personified through the figures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The verse indicates that "powers" (i.e., the *Sefirot*) were given to each of these figures according to their dispositions. The *Bahir* then describes how one *Sefirot*/attribute produces those that proceed from it, in a manner parallel to human reproduction (in this case, from father to son). Both Isaac and Jacob are described as "meriting" their own attributes through the nature of their progenitor Abraham. In the second portion of the passage, the authors of the *Bahir* list the patriarchs out of generational sequence, namely Abraham, Jacob, and then Isaac to confirm their nature as thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis: Abraham represents the thesis of *Hesed,* Isaac the anti-thesis of *Din*, and Jacob/*Tiferet* who sits between them as their synthesis (Scholem, *Origins* 144). Here, not only are the *Sefirot* personified in the figures of the patriarchs, but their process of emanation and the relationships between them also are reflected in their personifications as the patriarchs (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 68).

The last line of the verse refers to Isaac/*Din* as the attribute of Fear; however, it has been noted earlier that *Din* also refers to Judgement. Ultimately, both concepts represent the realization of God's transcendence. Where God is judge, He remains impartial and presumably distant. When negative, His Judgements induce fear. This attribute belongs to Isaac, due to God's commandment that Abraham should sacrifice

him. The *Bahir* indicates that the root of Isaac's fear is *tohu,* which connotes matter and nothingness, and is attributed to Abraham Bar Hiyya, the 12th century Neo-Platonist (Dan, Kiener, and Idel 67). Isaac's fear is explained as the fear that God is completely separate from creation (here *tohu* signifies matter), creating a non-traversable space between mankind and the divine (here *tohu* signifies nothingness) (67). In either case, the concept of separation is involved and results in a perception of the divine as transcendent.

In the *Fusūs al-Hikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom*), Ibn al-Arabi gives an account of 27 prophets and their respective missions and teachings, each of which represent a wisdom or attribute of the divine (Austin 16). The placement of a prophet in a given community is based on that community's ability and need (Austin 165). One of the themes of the *Fusūs* regarding the prophets relates to whether their teachings describe God as transcendent or immanent. The following discussion focuses on three of the prophets treated in the *Fusūs* and their positions with regards to the transcendence and immanence of God. The prophets discussed and their related attributes are Noah (Exaltation), Abraham (Rapturous Love), and Mohammed (Singularity).

In the *Fusūs,* Noah's wisdom or attribute was "exaltation." In Ibn al-Arabi's language, *exaltation* is a term that refers to the transcendence of the divine because the act of exalting God leads humans to recognize their difference, distance, and ultimate dependence on Him (Chittick, SD 132). According to Ibn al-Arabi, Noah did not succeed in calling his community to the divine because his method was erroneous. Noah's community held a position of extreme immanence, leading them to see the divine in all things and to the "worship of idols." To counter this tendency within the community, Noah's approach was "to separate" (*furqān*). Ibn al-Arabi applies the term *furqān* to Noah

in two senses: first to his method and then to the aspect of his teaching that reached, and ultimately was rejected by his audience. In terms of his method, Ibn al-Arabi states that Noah taught the transcendence and immanence of God separately, resulting in his community only receiving part of his message. The content of the message received refers to the second aspect of Noah's *furqān* in which he emphasized the transcendence of God by describing Him as separate from all things material and created (Iztusu 57).

Ibn al-Arabi notes that a middle position would have proved a better solution, since Noah's expressions of the transcendence of the divine achieved little except to alienate his community from him and his message. Ibn al-Arabi describes the situation between Noah and his community:

> Had Noah combined the two aspects in summoning his people, they would have responded to his call. He appealed to their outer and inner understanding saying, *Ask your lord to shield you [from your sins], for He is forgiving*. Then he said, *I summoned them by night [inwardly] and by day [outwardly], but my summons only made them more averse [outer]…* the reason for their not responding [positively] to his summons; the reason being that his summons was made in a spirit of discrimination [seeking to oppose transcendence and immanence] (Austin 75).

The "two aspects" Ibn al-Arabi refers to are the positions of the transcendence and immanence of God. According to Ibn al-Arabi, perspectives of transcendence and immanence are equally necessary to the human experience of the divine. Noah is said to have taught the *tanzīh* or the transcendence of God "by day" (that is, exoterically) and the *tashbīh* or immanence of God "by night" (esoterically). However, Ibn al-Arabi explains

that by virtue of being taught separately, the teachings could not reinforce one another, and therefore were lost to the community (Austin 76). The conflict between Noah and his community as described by Ibn al-Arabi represents the conflict between the concept of God as the impersonal Essence and the concept of God personified with attributes to which humans can relate (Austin 72). Although Noah's people relied on the attributes of the divine in their worship (a position of immanence), he sought to convert them to the contemplation of the Essence only (a position of transcendence). Since the attributes represent the relationships between the Essence and creation, Noah's denial of these attributes would have seemed to his community like a denial of the relationship they had already established with the divine.[58]

In the same chapter of the *Fusus*, Ibn al-Arabi juxtaposes the failure of Noah's mission with the success of Mohammed's. For Ibn al-Arabi, and the Islamic tradition at large, Mohammed represents the best of the prophets whose superiority lies in the cumulative and final nature of his message. In the *Fusūs*, Mohammed's method of teaching the transcendent and immanent aspects of the divine is described as simultaneous:

> …Muhammad said that he had been granted [knowledge of God] integrating all His aspects. Muhammad [unlike Noah] did not summon his people *by night* and *by day*, but by night during the day [an inner summons implicit in the outer one], and by day during the night [the outer truth being implicit in the inner] (Austin 77).

---

[58] Here, Ibn al-Arabi is likely making a comment regarding those Islamic theologians that denied the reality of the divine Names and emphasized instead the transcendence of the divine.

Here, the analogy between the teachings done "by night" and "by day" and the esoteric/exoteric forms of knowledge is made clear. The key difference between Mohammed's message and that of Noah's is that Mohammed's incorporated both aspects of knowledge (exoteric/esoteric and transcendent/immanent), whereas Noah chose to keep them distinct. According to Ibn al-Arabi, Mohammed's incorporation of the various aspects of the teaching relates to the nature of the *Quran* as "a conjunction" of these concepts.[59] In addition, Mohammed's role in Ibn al-Arabi's system as the Perfect Man who integrates all aspects of the divine within himself further attests to the fully "integrated" nature of his teaching. As a result, his trait in the *Fusūs* is that of singularity. Through his integrative function, Mohammed signifies the unifier of polarities or the synthesis to the thesis and anti-thesis of the transcendence and immanence of the divine.

In further contrast to Noah's attribute of exaltation/transcendence, the wisdom of Abraham and his attribute of rapturous love centers on the concept of divine immanence. With respect to Abraham's relationship with the divine, Ibn al-Arabi states: "Abraham was called the Intimate (*khalīl*) [of God] because he had embraced (*takhallala*) and penetrated all the Attributes of the Divine Essence" (Austin 91). Previously, the present study explained that the term *tashbīh* means similarity, which is associated with the concept of divine immanence in Ibn al-Arabi's system. This similarity is due to the relationship between the Names and creation, whereby the Names are manifested into creation, allowing God and mankind to share the same attributes in common. Abraham's ability to share in the divine attributes and become the "intimate" of God represents a position of divine immanence in which the divine attributes, and therefore the divine

---

[59] Note that here Ibn al-Arabi takes the term *Quran* to be derived from *qarana*—which according to Austin is "conjunction"—and not *qara'a,* which is the root traditionally accepted, meaning "to recite." (72)

itself, become present within Abraham (Nettler 74). The previously quoted passage refers

to Abraham "penetrating" all of the Attributes of the Essence, which again refers to the

role of the Perfect Man as the manifestation of all attributes in one locus. The theme of

penetration recurs in this chapter of the *Fusūs*; however, this time in regards to

Abraham's generosity:

> It was because Abraham attained to this rank by which he was called the Intimate
>
> [of God] that hospitality became a [sacred] act… Food penetrates to the essence
>
> of the one fed, permeating every part. So also with God, although in His case
>
> there are no parts but only Divine Stations or Names through which His Essence
>
> is manifest (Austin 95).

Here, the food that Abraham is said to be generous in providing to others penetrates and

nourishes in a manner parallel to the way in which the divine, as the source and

nourishment of the cosmos, penetrates and is immanent within it (Nettler 100). Thus, the

attribute of generosity is shared by both Abraham and the divine. Abraham is fed his

attribute through the divine and then "feeds" it to others, indicating the immanence of the

divine within himself, as well as his intermediary position between the divine and the

world (100).

The *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi both personify the various relationships between

mankind and the divine through the figures of the patriarchs/prophets. In the case of the

Bahir, the personification of the *Sefirot Hesed*, *Din*, and *Tiferet* occur through the figures

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Each of these figures signifies different aspects of man's

experience of the divine—immanence, transcendence, and the synthesis of the two. A

similar development occurs in Ibn al-Arabi's thought wherein some of the prophets

represent different perspectives on the scale between the transcendence and immanence of the divine. In the *Fusūs al-Hikam*, this representation occurs with Noah, Abraham, and Mohammed in their progression from positions of total transcendence, total immanence, and finally, the synthesis between the two in Mohammed.

The *Bahir*'s *Sefirot* and Ibn al-Arabi's divine Names are the intermediaries between the transcendent divine and creation. In both systems, the patriarchs/prophets personify and exemplify the attributes, and by doing so embody these attributes and become intermediaries themselves between man and God. This description applies to Abraham in both systems. The Abraham of the *Bahir* stood in the place of *Hesed* and "interceded for the world." For Ibn al-Arabi, Abraham's intimacy with God allowed him to be pervaded by the divine in a manner akin to food being dispersed through its consumer. Similarly, the Isaac of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Noah in the *Fusūs* both represent the concept of divine transcendence and are each related to the concept of seeing God as separate from creation. Finally, both systems posit the synthesis of the opposed attributes in a third figure who balances both perspectives: in the *Bahir*, this is Jacob, and in Ibn al-Arabi's writings, this is Mohammed. Thus, both systems give the intermediaries a reality through personification that goes beyond their theoretical functions. By making the *Sefirot*/Names incarnate within the patriarchs/prophets, each system allows mankind to relate and interact with the intermediaries who are the only means of accessing the divine.

In the course of the previous discussion, it has been shown that the position and function of the *Sefirot* and the divine Names are intermediary. Both sets of these intermediaries bridge the space between the most transcendent aspect of the divine and

creation. The previous chapter explained that the concept of the transcendent One,

existing beyond all multiplicity, was a Neo-platonic description of the divine,

contemporary to and exerting influence on both the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi.

In each case, the intermediaries that emanate from the transcendent One serve to make

God personal and active in creation. However, a problem arises when consideration is

given to the fact that the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi are situated within monotheistic

traditions. By conceptualizing separate and distinct aspects of the divine through the

Sefirot/Names, both systems break up the divine into constituent powers seemingly akin

to polytheism. The authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi were aware of this issue and

developed similar arguments to allow the transcendent-One and the immanent-

intermediaries to exist simultaneously. By doing so, each system allows for a definition

of the divine as both transcendent and immanent.

One of the ways that the *Bahir* deals with the issue of the Neo-platonic One (most

closely resembling *Keter*) and the remaining *Sefirot* is to attest to their ultimate unity. In

verse 48, the *Bahir* describes again the theophany at Sinai; however, here the seven

voices are said to have been understood as a single word: "At first they saw the voices.

What did they see? The seven voices mentioned by David. But in the end, they heard the

word that emanated from them all. But we have learned that there were ten. Our sages

taught that they were all said with a single word" (Kaplan 17). The "seven voices

mentioned by David" refer to the voices of God described in *Psalm* 29:3-9, which were

discussed previously. Here, those at Sinai are said to have perceived the voices as

separate and distinct, but also their message was ultimately singular in nature. The quoted

passage makes a distinction between seeing and hearing, and so the many voices are seen,

but the assimilation of the vision is unified through what is heard. In the *Bahir*, "hearing" and the "ear" are associated with the letter *Aleph,* which represents the highest levels of thought and mystical contemplation.[60] Thus, although the Sefirotic structure is made up of 10 intermediaries, the contemplative practice of the *Bahir* mystics was to recognize their ultimate unity (Green, *Medieval* 100).

Another method used by the *Bahir* to maintain the conceptual unity of the *Sefirotic* structure is to ensure that the *Sefirot* are understood as derived from, and lent power by, a single, transcendent source. Thus, the *Bahir* positions the *Sefirot* as true intermediaries who have divine origins but are still part of the creative process. Verse 22 of the *Bahir* describes the transcendent source of the *Sefirot*: "I am the One who planted this tree in order that all the world should delight in it. And in it, I spread All. I called it All because all depend on it, all emanate from it and all need it… Alone was I when I made it. Let no angel rise above it and say, 'I was before you'" (Kaplan 9). The tree planted by the unidentified transcendent speaker signifies the Sefirotic structure (Kaplan 101). The "All" that is spread throughout the structure refers to *Yesod/Shekinah*, the final *Sefirot* of the structure responsible for channelling divine immanence into creation (9). Here, everything in creation is described as relying on the "All" and by extension, the Sefirotic structure of which it is a part. However, by drawing attention to the transcendent entity that created the *Sefirotic* structure, the authors of the *Bahir* ensure that the intermediary Sefirotic system is not misunderstood to be the totality of the divine. This

---

[60] The symbolism and connotations of the *Sefirot* in the *Bahir* can change from one context to another. Here, the *Aleph* can refer to *Keter* or *Hokmah* (See Kaplan 102 and Wolfson, *Speculum* 287). Alternately, hearing and understanding may refer to *Hokmah* or *Binah* (Wolfson, *Speculum* 287 and Kaplan 144). Whichever the case may be, hearing is associated with the three highest *Sefirot* of the structure, as well as with mystical contemplation.

concern is attested to in the final portion of the verse when the speaker states that it acted independently when it created the Sefirotic structure: "Alone was I when I made it."

The *Bahir* also describes an ultimate unity existing between the transcendent divine, the *Sefirot*, and mankind. Verse 26 states:

> A king had a number of beautiful dwellings, and he gave each one a name. One was better than the other. He said, "I will give my son this dwelling whose name is *Alef*. This one whose name is *Yud* is also good, as is this one whose name is *Shin*." What did he do then? He gathered all three together, and out of them he made a single name and a single house (Kaplan 11).

The word "*Ish*" in Hebrew means man. Here, the authors of the *Bahir* have taken the term and broken it down into its three constituent letters, ascribing to each a portion of the universe. This tripartite division includes the transcendent divine, symbolized by *Alef*; the structure of the Sefirot, symbolized by *Yud*; and the letter *Shin* for mankind and creation (Kaplan 102). Even though they are ranked ("one was better than the other"), all three are said to form a "single house," denoting the ultimate unity of the divine, cosmos, and humankind. The fact that the word *Ish/*man is said to contain all of the components of the divine and the mundane, further attests to the concept of man as the microcosm of the divine in the *Bahir* (102).

In response to the multiplicity of the Names and creation, Ibn al-Arabi also emphasizes the overall unity of the divine. According to his system of thought, the multiplicity of the Names is required by creation but not by the Essence. The independence of the Essence in relation to the dependence of creation results in their different perspectives on the multiplicity of the Names: "The names of the names are

diverse only because of the diversity of their meanings. Were it not for that, we would not be able to distinguish among them. They are one in God's eyes, but many in our eyes" (Chittick, SPK 36). Ibn al-Arabi states that the multiplicity of the Names is required to produce the diversity of the cosmos, which forms the basis of the divine Self-Disclosure (Chittick, SD 72). Through the Names, the divine is able to interact with mankind, and so the Names exist in part for the benefit of creation. Previously, it was noted that without the Names, mankind can have no knowledge of the divine. Here, Ibn al-Arabi states that without the multiplicity of the Names, it would not be possible to "distinguish among them," meaning that mankind would not be able to relate to or gain knowledge of the divine. The Essence or the divine beyond the Names does not require multiplicity, and thus perceives the Names as unified within itself.

Further to providing cosmic diversity and knowledge of God, the Names also link their subjects to the Essence, producing unity. Ibn al-Arabi states: "Everything whose building is seen is suspended from a form in our Essence" (Chittick, SD 72). The "forms" referred to in this statement are the Names. Thus, to paraphrase "all things in existence within the cosmos are derived from the Names that emanate from the Essence." This is perhaps the most concise description of Ibn al-Arabi's system of thought regarding creation. The description of created things being "suspended" from the Names gives the impression that they are tethered to or rooted in those Names. The Names themselves are described as "forms" within the Essence, indicating that they are both distinguished yet incorporated in the divine. The dual function of the Names is attributed to their *barzakhī* nature. Previously, the present study discussed the concept of the *barzakh* (isthmus) as it relates to the Perfect Man who is said to have a "face" or inclination toward the divine, as

well as a "face" toward the cosmos. This special nature allows the Perfect Man to unite the divine and the cosmos within him/herself. In a similar vein, because the divine Names are derived from the Essence, and yet are responsible for creation, they also have two faces. One face is inclined toward the Essence, and the other toward creation (Izutsu 100). Thus, the *barzakhī* or dual nature of the Names ties together the three components of Ibn al-Arabi's system: creation, the Names, and the Essence. Each of these components is the source of creation for the next, maintaining their unity.

Finally, because of the ultimate unity of the three components—the Essence, the Names, and creation—Ibn al-Arabi states that the entire cosmos is the manifestation of the divine. His *Fusūs al-Hikam* says the following:

> That God Himself is the very proof of Himself and his divinity, that the world is nothing other than His appearance in the forms of their [created beings'] fixed essences whose existence is impossible without Him and that He is manifold in appearance as forms, according to the natures of these essences and their modes (Nettler 80).

Here, Ibn al-Arabi begins with the statement that God is His own "proof of Himself and his divinity." This can be understood as a statement regarding the transcendence of the divine, since it describes God as requiring nothing but Himself. The statement also refers to the concept of the Self-Disclosure and immanence of God, whereby God becomes His own proof through His manifestation into creation (Nettler 79). The nature of creation as the divine Self-Disclosure is then described by Ibn al-Arabi: "the world is nothing other than His appearance in the forms of their fixed essences." Here, the "fixed essences" refer to creation, whose existence, he explains, would be impossible were it not for the divine.

Thus, in this statement, Ibn al-Arabi unites the concept of the divine Self-Disclosure as disclosed to and for God alone with the concept of God as immanent within all of creation. Unity is achieved through the conjunction of these ideas in which the divine becomes both the source and the recipient of the divine Self-Disclosure.

In regard to the problem of the One and the Many, the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi both state that the question is a matter of perception. Both systems seem to agree that initially, humankind perceives the multiplicity of the cosmos. Later and through mystical contemplation, the truth of the ultimate unity is arrived at. In the *Bahir,* this truth is illustrated by the seven voices at Sinai perceived as separate and distinct, only later to be realized as a single word. The concept also is present in Ibn al-Arabi's thought, in which human beings, by nature of living within the diversity of the cosmos, see the multiplicity of the Names, when in fact their ultimate reality is one. Both systems also maintain the unity of the *Sefirot*/Names and the transcendent divine by stating that the latter is the source of the former. Thus, the *Bahir* describes the structure of the *Sefirot* as having been constructed by an unnamed source. Ibn al-Arabi similarly describes the Names as emerging from the transcendent Essence, yet remaining dependant on it as it emanates outward into creation. Finally, both systems conceptualize the transcendent as the source of the intermediary, and the intermediary as the source of creation. By doing so, they may claim that the three main components of their systems (the transcendent divine, the *Sefirot*/Names, and creation) are all united as one reality, the reality of the divine. The *Bahir* communicates this concept by uniting the "three houses" symbolized by the three letters of the word *Ish*/man. Ibn al-Arabi describes the ultimate unity of

reality through the concept of the divine Self-Disclosure in which the divine is both that which discloses and that which is disclosed.

This concludes this final chapter on the intermediaries of the *Bahir* and in Ibn al-Arabi's system. This chapter has examined the various roles of the intermediaries of both systems with regard to their bridging the space between the transcendent divine and creation. Through their roles in the process of creation, the *Sefirot* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's divine Names become the active principles of the transcendent divine. After the initial acts of creation are complete, the intermediaries of both systems continue to play an active role, bridging creation and the divine. This joining is achieved through the role of the intermediaries as the attributes of both the divine and mankind, making them the common ground on which the divine and creation may continue to commune.

Due to the diversity of the intermediaries, the type of communication that can occur varies. As a result, the intermediaries also represent the many relationships possible between mankind and the divine. Both systems describe the human-divine relationship by using examples of the patriarchs and/or prophets who are said to embody one or other divine attributes. Through their examples, the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi bring the seemingly theoretical or philosophical attributes "down to man's level" where they can be understood as having a direct impact on the human experience of the divine. Last, both systems resolve the problem of the One and the many through the dual function of the *Sefirot* and the divine Names, which participate in both the divine and creation. Thus, each system is able to simultaneously maintain the transcendence and the immanence of the divine.

Concluding Remarks

The discussion and analysis of the current study has centred on the themes of the transcendence and immanence of the divine in the thought systems of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi. Throughout, the following question was of concern: How does each system reconcile the tension that arises between traditional monotheistic descriptions of the divine as transcendent and their own conceptions of the divine as immanent? In the course of this study, it has been shown that the author(s) of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi went to great lengths to ensure that their systems of thought maintained both aspects of the divine. Thus, they remained in line with their own respective traditions, while producing a metaphysical theosophy that allowed for human access to the divine.

In reviewing the discussions about the transcendence and immanence of the divine in both systems, a pattern emerges in which descriptions of one polarity allude to the presence of the other. For instance, descriptions of transcendence suggest positions of immanence and vice versa. Ultimately, this forward and backward motion between the two polarities enables each tradition to maintain both concepts of the divine simultaneously, producing a unified vision of the divine. This pattern is central to the overarching points of comparison made in the previous chapters and provides a response to the research question in the preceding paragraph.

The study began with a discussion of the concept of divine immanence. Through the analysis provided, it was noted that both systems advance the idea that human beings are the microcosm of the divine, while the cosmos represents the divine macrocosm. In both systems, the role of mankind is that of synthesis: even though mankind is outwardly

made up of the cosmos, inwardly he/she possesses a divine nature. Thus, when discussing the immanence of mankind in either system, an obligation arises to speak of transcendence because man is both: close to the divine through his special inner nature, yet far from the divine due to his physical and cosmic nature.

The transcendence of the divine also is maintained when its immanence in man is described, in that the investiture of the human soul/divine logos does not enter mankind directly from the highest and most transcendent level of the divine in either system of thought. Instead, it emerges at an early stage of the emanative process, maintaining the transcendence of the divine in its highest state. In addition, both systems maintain the transcendence of the divine with regards to the manifestation of the logos. The *Bahir* states that the largest portion of the logos is stored in the World to Come, and Ibn al-Arabi posits that the manifestation of the divine into the logos (Mohammedan Reality) represents only a partial manifestation.

Finally, with regards to the premise of divine immanence, since humans possess a divine inner nature, both systems state that they are able to attain knowledge of God through the self. However, at the same time, both systems limit the scope of the knowledge man can attain this way by maintaining an aspect of the divine that remains ever beyond the boundaries of human perception (*Keter* in the *Bahir* or the Essence in Ibn al-Arabi). These brief examples illustrate how the concept of divine immanence in both systems has been limited throughout by concepts of divine transcendence.

The topic of the second chapter was the transcendent aspect of the divine in both systems. Based on the trend outlined in the preceding paragraphs, descriptions of the divine as transcendent connote divine immanence because in both systems, the

transcendent is the source of all creation and thus can only be discerned from a position of immanence. Both systems begin with the premise that the transcendent aspect of the divine is completely beyond human perception and therefore unknowable (this refers to the *Keter* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Essence). From this position with respect to the complete transcendence of the divine, each system states that the highest level of knowledge humans that can attain of the divine resides at the stage at which the transcendent divine begins to emanate (corresponding to the *Hokmah*/*Binah* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Cloud/Names). However, both systems posit that the point at which the transcendent divine emanates is the point at which it becomes the hidden source of all things. As the hidden source of all things, the transcendent divine becomes accessible within creation, pointing to a position of immanence. Thus, it becomes possible for the mystic who has grasped the meaning of his/her inner nature to discern the transcendent from its position of immanence. Although the complete transcendence of the divine has led to the concept of divine immanence just discussed, both systems maintain that knowledge gained of the transcendent from a position of immanence is necessarily limited. As a result, both systems retain an aspect of divine transcendence.

The third chapter focused on the system of intermediaries, which in each case signifies the ultimate solution for bridging the divide between the transcendent and immanent aspects of the divine. The success of this solution lies in the fact that the divine intermediaries (the *Sefirot* of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's Names) each exist simultaneously as part of the divine and part of creation. This dual nature and function make the intermediaries the glue, so to speak, that binds the transcendent and immanent aspects of the divine together, thereby uniting each system under one cosmogonic

umbrella. For instance, when the concept of the transcendent divine necessitates that it has little contact with mankind and creation, the divine intermediaries are able to make that contact through the creative acts and through their personification in the patriarchs and prophets. With these functions, the intermediaries interact with mankind and represent God's relationship with creation. Acting on the worldly plane, the intermediaries of both systems are understood as real and not just theoretical or philosophical concepts. In addition, because it is the intermediaries that interact with mankind, the transcendence of the divine can be maintained beyond this contact.

In the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought, the frequent shifts in perspective between the transcendence and immanence of the divine can be attributed to the desire to describe the ultimate nature of reality as a unified state of being. The dizzying effect induced by the constant shifting of perspectives is stabilized through the system of the intermediaries in which the transcendent One (resembling the Neo-platonic paradigm) is able to emanate into the many without being divided or decreased in anyway. These emanations bridge the divide between the material and spiritual world and allow for a relationship between creation and mankind. Thus, by producing their mystical systems of thought, the authors of the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi successfully maintain traditional concepts of divine transcendence while allowing for divine immanence.

It also should be noted that similar to the intermediaries, every aspect of both systems contains dual functions that allow a bridging of both aspects of the divine. For instance, *Keter* and the Essence are described as transcendent, yet each possesses an aspect directed toward immanence (whether a window to the *Shekinah* or the emanation of the divine Names). The *Sefirot* and Names are both described as being unified within

the divine, yet they also are distinct and active within creation. Finally, mankind as described through the *Shekinah,* the *Tzaddik,* and the Perfect Man all share an aspect of belonging to the cosmos while possessing an inner divine nature. The dual nature of these main components in each system maintains the transcendence and immanence of the divine while allowing each system to conceptualize an all-encompassing mystical reality.

Questions for Further Research

As mentioned in the introductory section of this study, during the course of this research, other points of comparison between the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought emerged. In terms of a larger theme that should be explored, both systems discuss a mystical contemplation of the divine name(s), leading to the attainment of a united consciousness with the divine (*mahshabah* in the *Bahir* and *wujūd* in Ibn al-Arabi). Second, and perhaps in relation to the first theme, since it also pertains to mystical ascent, is the concept of the reciprocal relationship between the divine and mankind whereby God is said to exalt man so that man in turn may exalt God (through prayer or mystical contemplation). Other points of interest may be that the concept of divine wisdom is associated with water in both the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought and that divine Mercy and Judgment as attributes are similarly described by both systems, especially where Judgment represents divine restraint. With respect to these points and in the dimensions explored in this work, various points of comparison are possible between the *Bahir* and Ibn al-Arabi's thought. Moreover, when stepping beyond the limit of these specific subjects to consider other points of comparison between Jewish and Islamic mysticism, the possibilities become exponential.

Works Cited

Judaic Sources

Abrams, Daniel. "Sefer Ha Bahir." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Eds. Michael Berenbaum and

    Fred Skolnik. 3 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007. 62-63.

Campanini, Saverio. ed. *The Book of Bahir: Flavius Mitridates' Latin Translation*.

    Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2005.

Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. *Medieval Jewish Philosophy: An Introduction*. Richmond:

    Curzon, 1996.

Dan, Joseph. "Gershom Scholem's Reconstruction of Early Kabbalah." *Modern Judaism*

    5.1 (1985): 39-66.

---. "Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah." *Midrash and Literature*. eds. Geoffrey

    Hartman and Sanford Budick. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. 127-139.

---. "The Enigmatic Book *Bahir*". *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of*

    History ed. Joseph Dan. New York: New York University Press, 1987. 127-146.

Dan, Joseph, Moshe Idel, and Ronald Kiener. *The Early Kabbalah*. Trans. Toronto:

    Paulist Press, 1986.

Elyon, Dina Ripsman. *Reincarnation in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosticism*. Queenston:

    Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Ginsburg, Elliot K. *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah.* Albany: SUNY, 1989.

Goetzen-Krieg, Carola. "The feminine aspect of God in the book of Bahir." *Bodies in*

    Question. eds. Darlene Bird and Yvonne Sherwood. Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.

    16-21.

Gottfarstein, Joseph. Trans. *Le Bahir: Le Livre de la Clarté*. Paris : Verdier, 1983.

Green, Arthur. "The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45.3 (1977): 327-347.

---. "The Zohar: Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Spain." *Introduction to Medieval Mystics of Europe*. ed. Paul Szarmach. Albany: SUNY, 1984. 27-66.

Idel, Moshe. "Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance." *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*. ed. Lenn E. Goodman. Albany: SUNY, 1992.

---. *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders*. New York: Central European University Press, 2005.

Kaplan, Aryeh. *The Bahir*. Trans. York Beach: Weiser, 1989.

Katz, Stephen. "Utterance and Ineffability in Jewish Neoplatonism." *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*. ed. Lenn E. Goodman. Albany: SUNY, 1992.

Meroz, Ronit. "Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah." *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mitzrahi Jewry* (2007). 39-56.

Schäfer, Peter. "Daughter, Sister, Bride and Mother: Images of the Femininity of God in the Early Kabbala." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68.2 (2000): 221-242.

---. *Mirror of His Beauty*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2002.

Scholem, Gershom Gerhard, and R.J. Zwi Werblowsky. *Origins of the Kabbalah*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987.

---. *Major Trends in Judaism*. New York: Schocken, 1961.

Séd, Nicolas. *Le Livre Bahir*. Milano: Arché, 1987.

Sirat, Colette. *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Stern, David. *Parables in Midrash*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. "Philosophy and Kabbalah: 1200-1600." *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy.* eds. Frank, Daniel H., and Oliver Leaman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 218–257.

Wolfson, Elliot R. *Through a Speculum That Shines*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

---. *Along the Path*. Albany: SUNY, 1995.

---. "Hebraic and Hellenic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer Ha-Bahir*." *Poetics Today* 19.1 (1998): 147-176.

Islamic Sources

Affifi, A.E. *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul Arabi*. Lahore: S.H Muhammad Ashraf, 1964.

Austin, R.W.J. *Ibn Al Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom*. Trans. Toronto: Paulist Press, 1980.

Bashier, Salman H. *Ibn Al-Arabi's Barzakh*. Albany: SUNY, 2004.

Chittick, William C. "Ibn Arabi's Own Summary of the Fusus 'The Imprint of the Bezels of the Wisdom'." *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* 1 (1982): 1-44.

---. "The Chapter Headings of the Fusus." *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* 2 (1984): 1-42.

---. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge.* Albany: SUNY, 1989.

---. "Ibn Arabi." *History of Islamic Philosophy I.* eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. New York: Routledge, 1996. 497-509.

---. *The Self Disclosure of God.* Albany: SUNY, 1998.

Chodkiewicz, Michael. *Seal of the Saints*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

---. *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book and the Law*. Albany: SUNY, 1993.

---. "The Vision of God according to Ibn al-Arabi". *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* XIV (1993). n. pag. Web. 25 Apr. 2011.

Corbin, Henry. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Elmore, Gerald. "Four Texts of Ibn al-Arabi on the Creative Self-Manifestation of the Divine Names". *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* XXIX (2001): 1-39. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.

Fenton, Paul and Maurice Gloton. *La Production des Cercles*. trans. Paris: Éditions de L'éclat.1996.

Haleem, M. Abdel. "Early kalam." *History of Islamic Philosophy I*. eds. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein and Oliver Leaman. New York: Routledge,1997. 71-88.

Hall, Elton. "Gnosis: Images of the Real." *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* XII (1992): 34-49.

Harris, Rabia Terri. "On Majesty and Beauty: The Kitab al-Jalal wa-l Jamal." *Journal of the Muhyiddun Ibn Arabi Society* VIII (1989): 5-32.

Hirtenstein, Stephen and Martin Notcutt. *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi*: *Divine Sayings (Mishkat al-Anwar)*. Trans. Anqa Publishing: Oxford, 2004.

Husaini, S.A.Q. *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn Al-Arabi*. Lahore: S.H Muhammad Ashraf, 1970.

Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Sufism and Taoism*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.

Little, John. "Al Insān al-Kāmil: The Perfect Man According to Ibn Al-Arabi*". *The*

Muslim World 77.1 (1987): 43-54.

Morewedge, Parviz. "The Neoplatonic Structure of Some Islamic Mystical Doctrines."

    Neoplatonism in Islamic Thought. ed. Parviz Morewedge. Vol. 5. Albany: SUNY,

    1992. 51-75.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi*.

    Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.

---. "Introductions to the Mystical Tradition." *History of Islamic Philosophy I*. eds. Nasr,

    Seyyed Hossein and Oliver Leaman. New York: Routledge,1997. 367-373.

Nettler, Ronald L. Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'anic Prophets. Cambridge: The Islamic

    Texts Society, 2003.

Nicholson, Reynold A. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. New York: Cambridge University

    Press, 1967.

Rosenthal, Franz. "Ibn Arabi Between Philosophy and Mysticism". *Oriens* 31 (1988):

    1- 35.

Shah-Kazemi, Reza. *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi and*

    Master Eckhart. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006.

Shayegan, Yegane. "The Transmission of Greek Philosophy to the Islamic World."

    History of Islamic Philosophy I. eds. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein and Oliver Leaman.

    New York: Routledge,1997. 89-104.

Singh, Emmanuel David. "An Onto-Epistemological Model: Adam-Muhammad as The

    Traditional Symbols of Humanity's All-Comprehending Epistemic Potential."

    The Muslim World 94 (2004): 275–301.

Comparative Sources

Fenton, Paul B. "Judaism and Sufism." *History of Islamic Philosophy I.* eds. Seyyed

Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. New York: Routledge, 1996. 755-768.

Kiener, Ronald. "Ibn Arabi and the Qabbalah: A Study of Thirteenth Century Iberian

Mysticism." *Studies in Mystical Literature* 2.2 (1982): 26-52.

Kraemer, Joel. L. "The Islamic Context of Medieval Jewish Philosophy." *The Cambridge*

Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy. eds. Frank, Daniel H., and Oliver

Leaman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 38-70.

McGaha, Michael. "The 'Sefer ha-Bahir' and Andalusian Sufism." *Medieval Encounters*

3.1 (1997): 20-57.

Steven Wasserstrom, "Sefer Yesira and Early Islam: A Reappraisal." *Journal of Jewish*

Thought and Philosophy III (1993): 1-30.

Other Sources

Cohen, Leonard. "The Guests." *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs.* Toronto:

McLelland & Stewart Inc., 1993.